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THE

NATURAL HISTORY

OF

IRELAND.

VOL. I.

BIRDS,

COMPRISING THE ORDERS

RAPTORES & INSESSORES.

BY

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LONDON:

REEVE, BENHAM, AND REEVE, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.

1849

REEVE, BENHAM, AND REEVE,
PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS OF SCIENTIFIC WORKS,
KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.

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PREFACE.

The adoption of the title Natural History of Ireland for this work, of which the Birds only are announced for early publication, requires some explanation. The Zoology of Ireland,—on nearly every branch of which the author has matter almost ready for the press,—would, it must be admitted, have been more strictly correct, as little else than that portion of the general subject is intended to be comprised in the work. It is, however, to be hoped that the name selected, may not be considered too presumptuous.

The volumes on Birds are put forward merely as supplementary to the several excellent works already published on British Ornithology. Hence it is unnecessary to enter into a description of the form or plumage, or into a general history of each species, these subjects having been amply treated of in the publications alluded to. The whole economy of the species, however, though not always dwelt upon, will be often fully illustrated from original observation.

Figures of Irish birds are not required, as all the species are included, down to the period of publication (to mention British works only) in Selby's Illustrations of British Ornithology; Gould's Birds of Europe; and the History of British Birds by Bewick, and Yarrell, respectively. Coloured figures of many of the species are also given in Sir Wm. Jardine's work on British

Birds; and in Mr. Macgillivray's, the heads, at least, of nearly all the land birds are represented.

With so much already done pictorially and descriptively, on the subject of British ornithology, it may be considered superfluous to treat of the birds of Ireland in a separate work, but, in the author's opinion, every country should possess a Natural History specially appertaining to itself. In the publications referred to, the birds of Ireland have been but briefly indicated,—a species generally dismissed in a single line, and so much appearing only in two works; —those of Sir Wm. Jardine and Mr. Yarrell.

The least reflection will convince any one who appreciates the geographical distribution of species, that the birds of Ireland are in this respect even more interesting than those of Great Britain, as, within its latitude and longitude, Ireland is the "ultima Thule," the extreme western limit to which the European species not found in the Western Hemisphere, resort. The geographical position of the island, also renders it occasionally the first European land on which North American species, after having crossed the Atlantic, alight.

Considerable differences, too, consequent on physical causes, will be found to exist in the economy of the same species in Great Britain and Ireland.

The *Physical Geography* or natural features of the country compared with those of Great Britain, cannot be said to deprive Ireland of more than one species (the ptarmigan). The relative proportion in the two countries, of land to water, of heaths and bogs to cultivated grounds and plantations, has influence only on the number of individuals.

Nor does the difference in the *mineralogical structure* of Ireland compared with Great Britain affect the actual presence of any species, although it is the primary cause which influences the

number of individuals prevailing in different parts of the island. The plants which appear on particular soils attract such land birds as feed upon their seeds. The submarine rocks and grounds on which sea-weeds grow plentifully so as to afford shelter to the minute fishes, and the molluscous and crustaceous animals on which the wading and swimming birds feed, tempt them in greater numbers to the neighbouring shores. The oozy, the sandy, the gravelly, the stony, the rocky beach, has each its favourite species, as has every peculiar natural or artificial feature of a country from the level of the sea to the most lofty mountain summit.

The difference in *climate* between Ireland and Great Britain cannot be said to deprive the former island of any species found in the latter. The comparative mildness of winter in the more western island has, however, great influence on birds. Even in the north of Ireland, a few land species, considered as birds of passage in England, except in the *extreme* south, become resident; and some grallatorial birds remain throughout the winter, although found only in the south of England at this season. The soft-billed birds also being generally able to procure abundance of food, are by the comparatively high temperature, more inclined to song at this period of the year. The *humidity* of the climate, together with the great extent of bog throughout the island, brings hither to winter, different species of grallatorial and other birds, in much greater numbers than prevail in England or Scotland. The extent of moist and rich meadows in summer has a similar, but more limited, influence. The want of extensive districts of *old timber* seems, when fully considered, to have little effect in excluding from Ireland species which inhabit Great Britain.

To the laws of *geographical distribution* alone must, I conceive, be attributed our want of species not affected by any of the

foregoing causes,—viz., physical geography, mineralogical structure, climate, and absence of old timber. It should be borne in mind that in all the preceding remarks the mere absence or presence of *species* is considered; consequently, nothing is said of birds from different causes being less frequently met with in Ireland, than in particular parts of England or Scotland. Such points will be fully treated of under the respective species.

Although in their polar and equatorial migrations, the crossing of a sea,—as the Mediterranean * for instance,—offers no obstacle to birds, yet is it different when they are spreading latitudinally; either to the east or to the west, in which case the migration of many species terminates at the margin of the sea. Were Ireland therefore geographically joined to Great Britain, some species that are not now found would certainly inhabit it, but the junction would make no difference with respect to others:—resident as well as migratory birds. In that event, we should in the east of Ireland at least, have those species which are found throughout the most western portion of Great Britain in the same parallel of latitude; but not those whose range of distribution does not extend to the most western counties of England and to Wales. The species which Ireland would and would not have, under such circumstances, may be inferred from an examination of the summary appended to the end of each Order of Birds, where the distribution over Great Britain of the species not known as Irish, is pointed out. We should, for example, if the country suited them, have as resi-

* A paper on birds seen crossing the Mediterranean in spring, by the author, will be fully given in the appendix to the last volume; but it was considered desirable to notice each bird included there when treating of its species. This was done that a person might be enabled on referring to any species to have the whole information respecting it before him at once. The author, however, feels that a reader of the matter continuously, may accuse him of too frequent allusion to the subject.

dent birds, the green woodpecker and the nuthatch; of annual summer migrants, the wood wren and the tree pipit. But we should not have the stock dove,—a resident species in the midland and eastern counties of England;—nor would the melodious nightingale favour us with its presence, so definitively marked is the line of its migration. As to other species, which are found though rarely to the westward,—in Cornwall and Wales,—as the lesser whitethroat, &c., they might then, as a matter of course, be expected as rare visitants; such they possibly may be now, though more unfrequently than they would be in the other instance.

In like manner, the junction of Great Britain throughout its parallels of latitude, with the nearest continental land, would add greatly to the number of British birds, that island being as deficient comparatively in those of the most western European countries, as Ireland is, in comparison with it. The sea lying between the shores of Great Britain and the continent, has the same effect as that extending between the former and Ireland. Were there an island even of equal size to Ireland, situated as far distant to the westward of that country as it is from Great Britain, the diminution of species would be still greater than that actually existing between Ireland and Great Britain, and so on, in an increased ratio, were island after island, about equidistant from each other, placed still farther to the westward.

The falling off would be owing to the principle, that species continue diminishing (each within its different range) the farther we recede from their metropolis, and that the diminution is accelerated by the insular nature of the land, as opposed to its being conterminous or continental.

The preceding remarks apply only to islands like Great Britain and Ireland lying near a continent and deriving their birds

thence.*† There are, however, instances of islands situated sufficiently near large continents to admit of the flight of birds from the latter, and yet deriving comparatively few, or none of their species from them. The most remarkable example is presented by the Galapagos archipelago, situated under the equatorial line, and which, though only 500 to 600 miles westward of the coast of South America, does not contain a land bird from the continent. Even some of the islands of the group have their peculiar species.‡ Full information on this most interesting subject will be found in Mr. Darwin's excellent journal, kept during the Surveying Voyages of H.M.S. Adventure and Beagle, vol. iii. p. 461 and 473–478. Madagascar, the nearest part of which is only about 250 miles distant from the coast of Africa and extending about 1,000 miles in a parallel direction, offers another striking instance of an island not deriving its fauna from the neighbouring continent. Of 113 known species of birds of Madagascar, 68 are peculiar to it. The fullest information on the subject of the ornithology of that island will be found in a comprehensive essay by Dr. G. Hartlaub of Bremen, published in the Annals of Natural History for Dec., 1848, p. 383–396. For a knowledge of it, and its translation from a German journal, the English reader is indebted to Mr. H. E. Strickland.

It is interesting to observe how birds are affected by the opera-

* One species only, the red grouse, is peculiar to the British Islands.

† These views were announced with great brevity in my Report on the Vertebrate Fauna of Ireland drawn up for the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and published in the volume for 1840. At the meeting of that Association held at Cambridge in 1845, Professor Edw. Forbes brought forward a very elaborate communication, accounting for the distribution of the species contained in the existing fauna and flora of the British Islands, on geological data. This highly interesting and remarkable essay (pp. 98) was subsequently published in the 1st volume of Memoirs of the Geological Survey of Great Britain.

‡ The flora of these islands is equally peculiar. See an admirable paper on this subject by Dr. Joseph D. Hooker in the Linnæan Transactions, vol. xx. part 2 (1847).

tions of man. I have remarked this particularly at one locality near Belfast, situated 500 feet above the sea, and backed by hills rising to 800 feet. Marshy ground, the abode of little else than the snipe, became drained, and that species was consequently expelled. As cultivation advanced, the numerous species of small birds attendant on it, became visitors, and plantations soon made them inhabitants of the place. The land-rail soon haunted the meadows; the quail and the partridge, the fields of grain. A pond, covering less than an acre of ground, tempted annually for the first few years, a pair of the graceful and handsome sandpipers (*Totanus hypoleucos*), which, with their brood, appeared at the end of July or beginning of August, on their way to the sea-side from their breeding haunt. This was in a moor about a mile distant, where a pair annually bred until driven away by drainage rendering it unsuitable. The pond was supplied by streams descending from the mountains through wild and rocky glens, the favourite haunt of the water-ouzel, which visited its margin daily throughout the year. When the willows planted at the water's edge had attained a goodly size, the splendid kingfisher occasionally visited it during autumn. Rarely do the water-ouzel and kingfisher meet "to drink at the same pool," but here they did so. So soon as there was sufficient cover for the water-hen (*Gallinula chloropus*) it, an unbidden but most welcome guest, appeared and took up its permanent abode; a number of them frequently joining the poultry in the farm-yard at their repast. The heron, as if conscious that his deeds rendered him unwelcome, stealthily raised his "blue bulk" aloft, and fled at our approach. The innocent and attractive wagtails, both pied and grey, were of course always to be seen about the pond. A couple of wild-ducks, and two or three teal, occasionally at different seasons, became visitants; and once, early in October, a tufted

duck (*Fuligula cristata*) arrived, and after remaining a few days took its departure, but returned in company with two or three others of the same species. These went off several times, but returned on each occasion with an increase to their numbers, until above a dozen adorned the water with their presence. During severe frost, the woodcock was driven to the unfrozen rill dripping into it beneath a dense mass of foliage; and the snipe, together with the jack-snipe, appeared along the edge of the water. The titlark, too, visited it at such times. In summer, the swallow, house-martin, sand-martin, and swift, displayed their respective modes of flight in pursuit of prey above the surface of the pond. The sedge-warbler poured forth its imitative or mocking-notes from the cover on the banks, as did the willow-wren its simple song. This bird was almost constantly to be seen ascending the branches and twigs of the willows (*Salix viminalis* chiefly) that overhung the water, for *Aphides* and other insect prey. In winter, lesser redpoles in little flocks were swayed gracefully about, while extracting food from the light and pendent bunches of the alder-seed. Three species of tit (*Parus major, cæruleus,* and *ater,*) and the gold-crested regulus, appeared in lively and varied attitudes on the larch and other trees. In winter, also, and especially during frost, the wren and the hedge-accentor were sure to be seen threading their modest way among the entangled roots of the trees and brushwood, little elevated above the surface of the water.

So far only, the pond and bordering foliage have been considered: many other species might be named as seen upon the trees. On the banks a few yards distant, fine Portugal laurels tempted the greenfinch to take up its permanent residence, and served as a roost during the winter for many hundred linnets, which made known the place of their choice by congregating in some fine tall poplars

that towered above the shrubs, and thence poured forth their evening jubilee.

To name all the birds that cultivation, the erection of houses,* the plantation of trees and shrubs together with the attraction of a garden, brought to the place, would be tedious. It will therefore only be further observed, that the beautiful goldfinch, so long as a neighbouring hill-side was covered with thistles and other plants on the seeds of which it fed, visited the standard cherry-trees to nidify; and the spotted flycatcher, which particularly delights in pleasure-grounds and gardens, annually spent the summer there. Of the six species of British *Merulidæ*, the resident missel and song thrushes, and the blackbird, inhabited the place; the fieldfare and redwing, winter visitants, were to be seen in their season; and the ring-ouzel, annually during summer, frequented an adjacent rocky glen. Curlews on their way from the sea to the mountain-moor, occasionally alighted in the pasture-fields. The entire number of species seen at this place (seventy-five English acres in extent) was seventy; forty-one or forty-two of which bred there. A few others,—the kestrel, ring-ouzel, sand-martin, and quail,—built in the immediate neighbourhood.

Nearly seventy species have been noticed in Kensington Gardens, London.† White remarks that "Selborne parish alone has exhibited at times [120 species] more than half the birds that are ever seen in all Sweden. The parish comprises an extent of thirty miles in circumference; and where else within the same

* Including houses in the category may seem inadvertent. But the house-martin annually built about the windows or under the roof of the dwelling-house; as the sparrow did in the spouts; the swallow against the rafters of sheds, and the swift in apertures at the eaves:—the thrush, redbreast, and wren also, occasionally nidified in the outhouses.

† Yarrell.

inland area should we hope to find so many, as amid the seclusion of that little earthly paradise, with all the "kindly aspects, and sloping coverts," pourtrayed in the pages of its amiable historian. By drawing a circuit of thirty miles around Belfast, and its most populous neighbourhood, (the boundary line being a mile and a half inland from the town, and eight miles and a half seaward, so that the opposite verge may include the greater portion of the bay,) we shall find that at least 185 species have been seen within it, some of them, too, possessing very high interest. Within that circle have appeared the first individuals of several species placed on record as visiting Ireland ,and the only examples of three species yet obtained; namely, the spotted redshank, the flat-billed sandpiper, and the surf scoter. Within the limited circuit of thirty miles, alighted in 1802, the first white-banded cross-bill (*Loxia bifasciata*) known to visit Europe, its native country being Siberia; nor for many years afterwards was the species observed in Great Britain, or in any country of continental Europe. Indeed within the last few years only, has it been distinguished from a nearly allied North American bird. Within the same range occurred the only individual of the Bonapartian gull (*Larus Bonapartii*) yet ascertained to have migrated to Europe, the species being a native of North America, and common in the fur countries, &c. Within that area was also obtained the first fork-tailed gull (*Larus Sabini*) known to wing its way southward, not only to temperate climes, but towards the continent of Europe; and being a young bird of the year, it appeared in a garb, in which the species had never before come under the notice of the naturalist.

But to return to the remark of White, respecting the parish of Selborne producing more species than the half of those found in all Sweden, it must be observed, that as a general rule the number

of species bears no comparison to the area; thus, there are in the parish of Selborne 120 species; within the same space around Belfast 185; in Ireland 262; in the British Islands generally 320; * in Europe 503; † in North America 471; † in Australia 636; ‡ in the world 5,000.‖

The neighbourhood of Belfast, including the bay,§ may be considered too fully dwelt upon throughout this work; but what is alluded to in this locality should, unless mentioned as of a local nature, be viewed in the light of an epitome of the general habits or economy of the species. Dates, which may seem too fully given, are interesting in a statistical point of view, as the rapid changes made by man on the material world, affect birds to a great extent. Nowhere is this more required than in connection with the place just named, as railways lately constructed on both sides of the bay, have diminished to a great extent the feeding-ground of the *Grallatorial* and *Natatorial* birds. Interesting peculiarities respecting the locality, and the changes effected, will be found noticed under curlew, and other species. The great increase of shipping of late years, and the steam-vessels in particular, have already had a great effect upon them. The swivel-guns, too, tell a deadly tale. The adjacent Strangford lough, owing to its comparative retirement, is becoming annually more and more resorted to by birds which would otherwise remain in Belfast bay.

* Jenyns in 1843; several species since added.

† Prince of Canino's Comparative Catal. Birds Europe and North America, 1838.

‡ Gould. Introd. to Birds of Australia, 1848.

‖ Strickland, Report on Ornithology, Brit. Assoc. Reports, 1844, p. 218. It has been lately remarked that although this is about the number accurately known, there may be in the world 6,000 species. Agassiz and Gould's Principles of Zoology, p. 3, (1848).

§ The plate in Hawker's Instructions to Young Sportsmen, &c. entitled "Approaching Wild-fowl preparatory to the Flowing Tide," gives a good idea of the gullets, as they are called, of Belfast bay.

But on this subject the following information on species, at particular periods, is given, that we may judge of the changes which have taken place, either as to their decrease or increase. Those which have *decreased in number* shall first be considered. According to the Topographia Hiberniæ of Giraldus de Barri (Cambrensis), written towards the end of the 12th century, the crane was very common in Ireland, about a hundred being sometimes seen in a flock. If the bird meant by that author were the true crane (*Grus cinerea*), and not the heron (*Ardea cinerea*), commonly called by that name in Ireland to the present day, the stately bird would seem to have been once as common here, as it was, in early times, in England. The latest published record of its occurrence in this island known to me, is that of Smith, who, in his Histories of Waterford (1745) and Cork (1749), remarks, that a few were seen in those counties during the great frost of 1739. They are mentioned as birds of passage, which do not breed; and in the former work are said not to have been seen "since or before in any person's memory." Two instances of the occurrence of single individuals in Ireland in the present century will be found noticed under the species in the present work. That noble bird, the cock of the wood (*Tetrao urogallus*), was plentiful throughout the native forests of Ireland, but has long since become extinct, the last bird having been killed about a century since. The great bustard (*Otis tarda*), too, an inhabitant of the open plain, disappeared about the same period.

In "A Brife description of Ireland made in this yeere 1589, by Robert Payne," it is stated:—"There be great store of wild swannes, * * * much more plentiful than in England." Harris, in his History of the County of Down published in 1744, remarks of the wild swan (*Cygnus ferus*):—"Great numbers of

them breed in the islands of Strangford lake," p. 233. In another part of the volume it is observed :—"Four of these islands are called *swan* islands, from the number of swans that frequent them," p. 154. That these fine birds built there at so comparatively late a period may seem doubtful; but it should be borne in mind that Low, in his Fauna Orcadensis, written at the end of the last century, informs us that "a few pairs build in the holms of the loch of Stennes," in Orkney.* Rutty, in his Natural History of the County of Dublin published in 1772, observes :—"There are two sorts [of "wild goose, *Anser ferus*"], the one a bird of passage, that comes about Michaelmas and goes off about March; but there is a larger kind which stays and breeds here, particularly in the Bog of Allen," vol. i. p. 333. Harris, in his History of Down, speaks of the "great harrow goose being found in a red bog in the Ardes near Kirkiston," but says nothing of its breeding there. An octogenarian friend has, however, informed me that a relative often told him that he had robbed the nests of wild geese in this very locality, *Kirkiston flow ;—red bog* of Harris ;—the period of his doing so was previous to the year 1775. There is little doubt that the true wild goose (*A. ferus*) was the bird alluded to, as it formerly bred plentifully in the fens of England, though for a considerable period they, as well as the bogs of Ireland, have been deserted by it.

The golden eagle is becoming annually more rare, and is now even "very scarce" † in its former stronghold, the county of Kerry. The kite, remarked by Smith in his History of Cork (1749) to be so common as to "need no particular description," and to remain "all the year," has been known in the present century, only

* No date is given: the author died in 1795. His work was not published until 1813.

† Mr. R. Chute.

as an extremely rare visitant to any part of the island; this species would be affected by the absence of wood. The Bittern, on the other hand, affected by the draining of the bogs, has almost ceased to breed in Ireland, though it commonly did so throughout the island, until a late period. It now ranks as little more than an occasional winter visitant from more northern countries. The curlew, golden plover, lapwing, and others, have been driven from many of their breeding grounds by the drainage of the bogs; as has the shell-drake from many rabbit-burrows, which are no longer retired, owing to the increase of population. This has likewise influenced the whimbrel to change its haunts around Belfast, where, until the last forty or fifty years, it regularly frequented the pastures, including the upland ones, during the few weeks of its sojourn when on migration northwards. Of late years, it has been seen only on the sea-shore: pastures and bogs seemed to be its favourite places of resort in spring. The total disappearance of the beautiful goldfinch and bullfinch from districts which they had regularly frequented, the varying increase and decrease of the swallow tribe, partridge, &c., will be found treated of under the species, as will the great increase and decrease of the black-headed gull at particular localities.

It is not on the land only that changes have taken place. Wigeon, in consequence of being too much disturbed in Belfast bay, by increase of shipping, steam-vessels, &c., even by night—their feeding time—have greatly diminished within the last twenty years. Previous to that period, they arrived here every evening at twilight, in vast numbers from Strangford lough, and after remaining to feed during the night, again retired every morning before daybreak, to the comparative quietude of its waters. Morning and evening, shooters took their station on the

hill tops, over which the birds often flew within shot; but of late such "occupation 's gone." Similar changes respecting others of the *Anatidæ*, and also of the *Grallatores*, will be found under the respective species. The beautiful and graceful roseate tern has nearly, if not wholly, disappeared within the last few years from a favourite annual breeding haunt, the Mew island, at the entrance of Belfast bay, the result, I grieve to say, of wanton cruelty. Persons go to the island every summer to shoot these birds, and the closely allied Arctic and common terns, while they have eggs or young. Should one even of a different species be brought to the ground, while the others are a little distant, they make common cause, wheel down towards their fallen comrade as if to compassionate its fate, and are even at such times "savagely slaughtered." The shooters have no object in view but the heartless one of using as targets these beautiful and innocent creatures, which are afterwards flung away as useless.

Other birds have *increased in number* of late years; the most striking example of which, for a regular and steady augmentation, is the missel thrush. The long-tailed tit has also become gradually more plentiful: the extension of plantations is accessory to this end, in respect to both species. The singular increase of snow-buntings during a few winters will be found noticed; as will that of crossbills in recent years. Allusion to the rapid multiplication of the magpie from the period of its introduction to the island, must not be omitted. The fact of the starling having deserted the town of Belfast as a building haunt for perhaps forty years, and two or three pair returning again last season, is singular. The increase in the number of quails wintering of late years, and in the number of woodcocks remaining through the summer, to breed in favourite localities, is worthy of record.

A great deal more might be stated, in these general terms, on

the subject of the increase and decrease of species. But it is hoped that sufficient has been said to denote the desirableness of our possessing full and accurate ornithological statistics of Ireland, such as the author intends to give in the detailed notices of the species throughout the work.*

The author expects to be enabled to furnish a carefully drawn up list of the Irish names of native birds for the concluding volume.

It now only remains for him to return his most grateful acknowledgements to all whose names appear as contributors of information throughout the work. Every one in Ireland known to the author as possessing positive knowledge on the subject of native birds, on being applied to, most cheerfully imparted the result of his observations. Indeed, so fully have these been taken advantage of, that the work should rather be considered that of Irish ornithologists generally than of the individual whose name appears on the title page.

Belfast, Dec., 1848.

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* Various general points of economy treated of under the respective species, will be classified in an index to the last volume of Birds.

BIRDS OF IRELAND.

Order, RAPTORES.

BIRDS OF PREY.

BIRDS OF IRELAND.

Order I. RAPTORES.

(*Birds of Prey.*)

THE GOLDEN EAGLE.

Aquila chrysaëtos, Lin. (sp. *)

—— *fulva*, „

Inhabits permanently several of the most lofty and retired mountain ranges throughout Ireland.

Distribution, Eyries, Habits, &c.

The collection of my friend, William Sinclaire, Esq. of Belfast, contained a splendid specimen in adult plumage of the golden eagle, which was trapped some years ago on Muckish mountain, in the county of Donegal. In June, 1832, the gamekeeper of Mr. Stewart of "the Horn"† informed me when there, that since he entered on his present occupation in 1828, he had destroyed thirteen or fourteen eagles, of which a single individual only was of this species: it was taken on one of the inland mountains of

* An abbreviation of the word species, implying that the specific (and not the generic) name, is that of the author quoted. *Falco* is the Linnean genus.

† The name given to the peninsula bounding the western entrance to Sheephaven, that terminates in the stupendous promontory of Horn Head.

the Horn. When visiting about the same time the precipitous mountain of Rosheen, near Dunfanaghy, in that county, I was told that for a long time previous to the preceding twelve years, a pair of eagles had built their eyrie in one of the inaccessible cliffs, and as their young advanced in growth, they levied such contributions from the surrounding neighbourhood, that the country-people finally resolved upon their destruction. This was effected by lowering from the summit of the precipice a lighted brand, which ignited and consumed the nest, and three unfortunate eaglets fell scorched and dead to the ground. The old birds from that time deserted the mountain. The situation selected for this eyrie indicates that the species was most probably the golden eagle.*

One of these birds, shot at the end of November, 1837, in the county of Londonderry, has come under my notice.

In October, 1833, when looking over a collection of the British *Falconidæ* belonging to Wm. Sinclaire, Esq. with Mr. Adams, lately gamekeeper at Glenarm Park (county of Antrim), he at once recognised a golden eagle as the species of which he had killed four individuals in that locality. The first he saw, was in the month of March, when two visited the park. At this time there were but five lambs dropped, and on each of the first two days of the eagles' appearance, a couple of them were carried off. Finding that lambs were in such request with these birds, the keeper procured two as bait for his traps, and successfully, as both eagles were captured. In November, a third individual was seen in pursuit of a hare by my informant and several other persons. The poor animal took refuge under every bush that presented itself, but, as often as she did, the eagle approached the bush so near as apparently to beat its top with his wings, and thereby forced the hare to leave it. In this way she was eventually driven to open ground, where the eagle soon came up with, and bore her off in

* Mr. R. Ball mentions a similar circumstance, in the following note. "In the summer of 1837, I saw a pair of golden eagles in the county of Kerry, that were proprietors of an eyrie in a cliff, from which they for a long time issued to commit depredations on the poultry and lambs of the neighbouring peasantry, who in vain endeavoured to get at their nest. At length a boy contrived to sling fire into it, and so destroyed the young, but the old birds still boldly defy all attempts made for their destruction."

his talons. A trap, baited once with a rabbit, and again with a hare, was set for this eagle, and on each of these animals he pounced, but finding that they would not rise with him,—in consequence of their being held down by the trap,—he immediately left them. Mr. Adams, hearing that this eagle had killed several of a neighbour's ducks, lost little time in obtaining one for his trap, and with this tempting bait secured him. Upon the fourth eagle the keeper came by chance when out shooting. This bird flew overhead, and was fired at from about twenty yards distance; the shot from the first barrel bereft him of many feathers, and by the contents of the second he was severely wounded, but able to fly off. Some men who were near, having told the keeper that they had seen an eagle mobbed by magpies, he was eventually discovered by the great number of these birds collected about the place on the heath where he lay dead, with outstretched wings. Only one sea eagle was obtained within the same period at Glenarm Park. On the 14th of Oct., 1835, I saw an adult specimen of the golden eagle, which was trapped the day before at Claggan (Antrim). It was accompanied by two others, but the attempt to capture them was unsuccessful.

By the late Dr. M'Donnell and another friend, both of whom well recollected the circumstance, I have been assured that the plan adopted by the Kerry peasant for supporting his family in a season of scarcity,* was successfully resorted to about thirty years ago at Glenariff, in the county of Antrim. One of a pair of eaglets taken from a nest there was so placed, that its parents during the summer supplied it with rabbits and hares in such abundance, that its owner obtained, in addition to what the bird required, a sufficiency of animal food for himself and his family. The old birds did not alight with their prey, but circling for some time above the eaglet, apparently calculating the distance, they dropped the food within the limited reach of its chain.

A sporting friend, who was eye-witness to the fact, assures me that when out hunting among the Belfast mountains many years ago, an eagle, which from the darkness of its plumage he concluded

* Smith's Kerry, p. 97.

was the golden, appeared above his hounds as they came to fault after a good chase, on the ascent to Devis, the highest of the range. As they came on the scent again, and were at full cry, the eagle for a short time kept above them, but at length advanced, and carried off the hare when at the distance of three or four hundred yards before the hounds.*

In the autumn of 1836, the intelligent gamekeeper at Tollymore Park (Down), the seat of the Earl of Roden, informed me that during the preceding nine years of his residence there, he had never met with the golden eagle among the neighbouring mountains of Mourne. In the summer of 1837, one of these birds was killed in that part of the country.

Mr. W. M'Calla of Roundstone, Connemara (Galway), made in substance the following communication to me in 1841. Golden eagles are not uncommon in that district,† but seldom seek their prey in the neighbourhood of villages. Their eyries are generally among inaccessible cliffs in the range of mountains called the Twelve Pins; but, in one instance, a pair bred in the level part of

* When grouse-shooting on the elevated and romantic mountains attached to Megarnie castle in Perthshire, late in October, 1829, my friend and I were surprised on one occasion by seeing a great number of grouse (*Tetrao Scoticus*) flying for a considerable distance so low as merely to overtop the heath. Passing us a short way off, they disappeared over an adjoining knoll. Thinking that they had alighted there, we hurried forward with our dogs, and not finding them, we on looking above perceived a golden eagle sailing along in the direction they had flown. This bird was presumed to have caused their unwonted flight, and its slow mode of progression gave us further hope that the grouse might still be near. Expecting them to lie well, in consequence of the eagle's being above, we carefully "beat" the ground for about a mile around, but not a grouse was found; which, added to the eagle's flight being right onward, left little doubt that they had continued flying for a great distance in the unusual manner described.

† O'Flaherty, in his West or H-Iar Connaught, written in 1684, and published by the Irish Archæological Society in 1846, remarks at p. 12:—"Here is a kind of black eagle, which kills the deere by grappling him with his claw, and forcing him to run headlong into precipices." The golden eagle being a bold bird, as well as darker coloured than the sea eagle, is, I presume, meant. The deer alluded to must be the stag, or red deer (*Cervus elephas*). The following note, from Martin's Western Islands, Isle of Lingay, p. 70, is appended by the editor to the quotation given:—"The black eagle fixes his talons between the deer's horns, and beats its wings constantly about its eyes, which puts the deer to run continually, till it falls into a ditch, or over a precipice, where it dies, and so becomes a prey to this cunning hunter. There are, at the same time, several other eagles of this kind, which flye on both sides of the deer, which frights it extremely, and contributes much to its more sudden destruction."

the country, selecting for the purpose a small island in the mountain lakes between Flin's house and Maam. His attention was called to these birds by the country-people remarking, that they were feathered to the toes, and on his approaching the island when incubation was advancing, he obtained so near a view of one of them, as to be certain of its species. Notwithstanding the shyness of the golden eagle, it sometimes approaches the houses in remote parts of the district, and is more daring than the sea eagle. A family living a few miles from the locality indicated, were rearing a number of young turkeys, and as these birds are prone to wander, several of them were carried off by a golden eagle. The people then endeavoured to confine the turkeys to the immediate vicinity of the house, yet the eagle as usual paid his visit. In the attempt to seize one of them, he was baffled by the flock taking cover among some furze, but unwilling to relinquish his prey, he alighted on the adjacent ground. One of the men who were at work in the field, having gone for his gun, approached within a few yards of the eagle and attempted to shoot him, when the gun burned priming. The bird now alarmed took wing, but the tender flesh of young turkeys was irresistible, and instead of making his escape, he hovered round the place until shot. An eyrie approached by my informant for the purpose of procuring the eggs, (which he has not known in any instance to exceed two in number,)was situated in the face of a steep rock, and although he could get within six feet of it from above, the rock overhanging it prevented all access. Two years previously, some persons looking over the cliff at this nest, threw a dog into it, by which means two eaglets were forced out and secured. The poor dog remained in the nest for several days, but when nearly famished, he took courage and leaped down, fortunately without injury.

The Rev. B. J. Clarke remarked, when writing to me in March, 1841, from the wild district of Belmullet (county of Mayo), where he had resided for some time, that, although sea eagles are common there, he had seen the first golden eagle but a few days before: it was on the sand-banks within thirty yards of him. On visiting Achil, off the coast of Mayo, in June, 1834, (accom-

panied by Robert Ball, Esq. of Dublin,) Lieutenant Reynolds of the Preventive Service, a keen sportsman, and well acquainted with birds, assured us that one or two pair of golden eagles breed annually in the island. When subsequently on the mountain of Croaghpatrick, which volcano-like terminates in a magnificent cone, and is in elevation the second in Connaught, we for a considerable time observed a pair of these eagles soaring above its summit. In the county of Kerry a few weeks afterwards, an eagle, supposed to be of this species, was seen from the top of Mangerton, which towers above the lakes of Killarney. Mr. Robert Patterson, of Belfast, when visiting this place in the previous autumn, made the following note:—"Near to the little lake called the Devil's Punch-bowl, we disturbed four eagles preying on a full-grown sheep; they rose majestically into the air as we approached. The people who were with us supposed that the sheep, being perhaps sickly, had been killed by the eagles,—a supposition corroborated by the quantity of fleece scattered over the ground for some yards in one direction. The flesh of the neck was completely removed, although that of every other part was untouched. We were assured that two eagles will occasionally pursue a hare, one flying low and coursing it along the ground, the other keeping perpendicularly above the terrified animal, and occasionally changing their places, until the hare is completely wearied out. The same circumstance was mentioned a few days afterwards at Tralee, and again at Monasterevan: my informant in every instance stated the fact, not as a matter of hearsay, but as one which had fallen under his own knowledge."* The golden eagle has now become very scarce in Kerry.†

A golden eagle was shot in Westmeath in Feb., 1838, when accompanied by another; and a fine specimen was in the autumn of 1843 killed at Clontarf, near Dublin. Mr. Robert Davis, jun., of Clonmel, notices a male bird in the plumage of the second

* This practice is mentioned in the "Wild sports of the West;" (Letter 19) in the work entitled "The Moor and the Loch;" and in an article on "Highland Sports," in the Quarterly Review for Dec. 1845, being a review of Scrope's "Days and Nights of Salmon Fishing," p. 103.

† Mr. R. Chute.

year, as shot at Curraghmore, the seat of the Marquis of Waterford, early in June, 1837; and, at the end of the same month, an eyrie situated in the rocks above Counshenane* lake in the Comeragh mountains, county of Waterford, was robbed of an eaglet of this species. On the 21st of April, 1841, he sent persons to the same eyrie to procure eggs, who succeeded in obtaining two, which seemed to be about a fortnight laid, and were very dissimilar in size and appearance. He states that this bird is met with in Knockmeledown, and the Galtee mountains, and is occasionally seen far from its haunts. In the "Fauna of Cork," it is said to breed on the borders of that county, and in Tipperary.

I have never known the eyrie of the golden eagle to be in marine cliffs in Ireland. Mr. Macgillivray, who, in his History of British Birds, gives interesting particulars on this species from personal observation, states, on the authority of Mr. Forbes of South Ronaldshay, that it breeds on the headlands of Orkney (vol. 3, p. 230).

Docility, &c.—In the two excellent works, "Gardens and Menageries of the Zoological Society," and "Illustrations of British Ornithology," the golden eagle is characterized as indocile: in the latter work, Mr. Selby speaks from his own experience of two individuals which were kept by him for some years. But my friend Richard Langtry, Esq. of Fortwilliam, near Belfast, had in 1838 a bird of this species, which was extremely docile and tractable.† It was taken in the summer of that year from a nest in Inverness-shire,‡ and came into his possession about the end of September. This bird at once became attached to its owner, and after being about a month in his possession, was given full liberty, —a high privilege to a golden eagle having the use of its wings, —but which was not abused, as it came to the lure whenever call-

* Coumshingaun of Ordnance Survey Map.

† Mr. Yarrell (Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 13,) after alluding to Mr. Selby's birds, remarks, that in the menageries of the Garden of the Zoological Society of London, where there are two golden and four white-tailed eagles, the keepers find the former the more tractable of the two species.

‡ At Aberarder, in this county, I saw a golden eagle displayed among the numerous "winged vermin" on the gable end of the shooting lodge, in September, 1842.

ed. It evidently derived much pleasure from the application of the hand to its legs and plumage, and permitted itself to be handled in any way. As one of the first steps towards training this eagle for the chace, it was hooded after the manner of a hunting hawk, but the practice was soon abandoned as unnecessary, in consequence of its remaining quiet and contented when carried on the arm of its master. It was unwilling indeed to leave him even to take a flight, unless some special "quarry" was in view. When at liberty for the day, and my friend appeared in sight at any distance, his arm was no sooner held out towards the affectionate bird, than it came hurriedly flying to perch upon it. I have, when in his company,—for it was quite indifferent to the presence of strangers,—seen it fly to him without any food being offered, not less than a dozen times within half an hour. When on the ground, and the lure was thrown comparatively near, this bird preferred running, —which it could do very fast,—to using its wings. It was also fed from the "fist." Live rats were several times turned out of the cage-trap to it; but before getting far away, they were invariably pounced upon. Four full-grown rats have been taken at a meal; an entire heron, (*Ardea cinerea*), except the head and legs, was also eaten on one occasion. It differed somewhat in its manner of feeding from two sea eagles which were kept along with it; when the head and neck of a goose were offered, the golden eagle eat them wholly, the latter took the flesh off only, leaving the harder parts; and when entire birds were given, the sea eagle plucked many more feathers off than the golden;* the latter assimilating to the peregrine falcon in this respect. This golden eagle was more partial to alighting on trees than the sea eagles were. Flying from one group of them to another, it in this manner followed its master about the demesne, indolently remaining as long as possible where it perched, consistently with always keeping him in sight. My friend discontinued any further training of this eagle on account of its boldness, as it flew not only at well-grown cygnets of the tame swan, but at the old birds themselves, which

* Birds up to the size of sparrows are eaten whole by the golden eagle; three sparrows have been taken in succession without a feather being plucked off.

were obliged to take to the water for safety: it also flew at dogs, so that its liberty had to be lessened. This bird has now been for some years in the menagerie of the Royal Zoological Society, Phœnix Park, Dublin. A golden eagle, belonging to Mr. Wm. Sinclaire, was a more familiar bird than a sea eagle in his possession, but being kept in town, its docility was not much put to the proof.

Size and Weight.—The golden eagle is generally represented as larger than the sea eagle, but such specimens of the latter as I have examined, were invariably of superior size to the former, and I speak from comparison of adult individuals of the same sex. A similar remark is made in the "Fauna of Cork." Mr. Sinclaire's bird just alluded to, after having been in captivity for a year, had its wings accidentally broken, and was in consequence destroyed: its weight was 7 lbs. 14 oz. The specimen from Donegal in this gentleman's collection weighed on being captured 9 lbs: both of these birds were males. One of those killed in Glenarm Park (sex not noted) weighed 10 lbs. A large female sea eagle obtained in Donegal, and believed to be in her fourth or fifth year, weighed 14 lbs.*

Irides.—When visiting in May, 1844, (along with my friend Wm. Ogilby, Esq.,) the magnificent menagerie at Knowsley in Lancashire, the seat of the Earl of Derby, the different coloured irides of two golden eagles attracted my attention; one, a bird five years old, having them golden, while those of the other, whose age was not known, were of a whitish-brown hue. This is mentioned simply as a fact, and not as anything remarkable, as the irides of birds vary in colour at different ages. But I certainly did not expect so great diversity in the colour of the irides, as was exhibited in a pair of condors at the Surrey Zoological Gardens, in April, 1834; those of the male being of a dark dull yellow, while those of the female were of a brilliant red.

Great eagle-cage in the Zoological Gardens, Phœnix Park, Dublin.

More eagles of different species being brought together here than perhaps in any other place, Mr. R. Ball, the Honorary Secre-

* Mr. J. V. Stewart.

tary, at my request, kindly supplied the following account of them in July, 1845.

"The great eagle-cage in the Garden of the Royal Zoological Society of Ireland is 36 feet long, 16 broad, and 16 high, and was erected at the expense of Sir Philip Crampton, Bart., as a place for the exercise of the large *Carnivora*, and consequently called a Deambulatorium. It failed in its original object. A tigress placed in it quailed, and seemed most anxious to regain her small den; a lioness and a leopard had to be forced into it. Sometime afterwards I had seven Eagles placed in it as an experiment, and they seemed to agree perfectly. To these, additions have been made for the last four years, until the number now amounts to 17: viz., 3 Golden, 2 White-headed, and 12 Sea Eagles; for some time a Choka Eagle was of the number, but it has since been removed to a smaller cage. The eagles live together, if not in harmony, at least in a sort of mutual respect towards each other. I know of only one quarrel, and at this I happened to be present. A sea eagle pounced on a golden eagle; the latter threw itself on its back, when the former with its talons seized it by the legs until it seemed to faint in agony, while the assailant gave forth its loudest barking cry in triumph. I had some difficulty in beating this bird off the other with a pole; it was removed from the cage, and shortly afterwards accidentally killed. On another occasion, a golden eagle was found drowned in the bath, or large trough in which the eagles delight to roll; it was supposed by the keeper to have been forced under water by one of the sea eagles, but more probably it got cramped, as the birds seem often to carry their bathing to excess. It is a remarkable fact, that a sea eagle but one year old, seemed to be generally acknowledged as the superior of the whole. This bird seized the first piece of food thrown into the cage as its acknowledged right; but should any other eagle happen to get possession of it, the food was instantly given up on the approach of the young one, which, when full grown, was about the largest of the flock. The bathing of the eagles alluded to is remarkable. On observing that these birds, which in menageries are generally kept without water, exhibited a great desire

to wash themselves, a large vessel was provided: when fresh water is put into this vessel, it is at once occupied by one of them, and surrounded by the others waiting their turn for a dip; they constantly lie in it for some time until completely wetted."

THE SPOTTED EAGLE.

The Rough-footed Eagle.

Aquila nœvia, Brisson.
Falco „ *F. maculatus,* Gmel.

Has been obtained in the south of Ireland.

In September, 1845, Mr. R. Davis, jun., of Clonmel, wrote to me respecting a bird then in his possession: "In contour, bill, eyes, legs, &c., it is a miniature of the golden eagle, but about one-third less than a male of that species; except the tail-coverts and some spots on the wings and breast, it is entirely of a very deep glossy blackish-brown: the body is of small size, comparatively with the head, wings, and tail." [Claws, yellow; beak, horn-colour, with a yellow streak at the base; weight, rather exceeding that of a full-grown raven.*] This gentleman subsequently forwarded for my inspection, a coloured drawing of the bird, (which he believed to be of this species,) representing it in immature plumage. A wood-cut taken from the drawing has appeared in the second edition of Yarrell's British Birds, vol. i. p. 10, and in the Zoologist for January, 1846. In a communication made to the Annals of Natural History for Nov., 1845, p. 351, Mr. Davis stated that the bird was shot when preying on a rabbit, in January, 1845, on the estate of the Earl of Shannon, in the county of Cork. Another eagle of the same species, said to be similarly marked, but rather lighter in colour, had been killed there a few days before. The two birds had been observed for several weeks previously, sweeping over the low grounds between Castle-martyr and Clay Castle, near Youghal.

In a letter from Dr. Harvey of Cork, dated Oct. 30, 1845, it was remarked, with reference to the Irish specimen:—"Mr.

* Noted by Mr. S. Moss, of Youghal, who received the bird in a fresh state.

Parker * took a portrait of the little eagle while I had it for a short time, and mentioned a singular coincidence. When on a visit to Mr. Butler of Waterville, a few days before the bird came under his inspection, that gentleman had mentioned a small brown eagle, in all respects like a golden eagle, except in being about half the size, as frequenting the mountains above Cahirciveen, in Kerry:—he had seen it occasionally during the last seven or eight years. To the Rev. Mr. Bastable, a clergyman of the neighbourhood, it was likewise known." I have little doubt, also, that a bird particularly described to myself, when visiting Horn Head (Donegal), in 1832, as having been shot there the previous year, was of this species.

The Spotted Eagle has not been met with in England or Scotland. In Continental Europe, it appears to inhabit chiefly the east and south; but has been obtained in most of the countries southward of the Baltic Sea, including Belgium and France.

THE SEA EAGLE.

White-tailed Eagle.

Haliaëtos albicilla, Briss. (sp.)
Falco ossifragus, Linn.

Is found in suitable localities throughout Ireland, and is resident.

Distribution, Eyries, Habits, &c.

The first Sea Eagle I had the satisfaction of seeing in Ireland, was on the 25th June, 1832, when visiting the majestic promontory of Horn Head (Donegal), which rises precipitously from the ocean to an elevation of nearly 600 feet. On looking over the cliff on the eastern side, one of these birds rose from a platform of rock about sixty yards distant. Immediately afterwards, on reaching the northern side, I perceived another sitting on her nest, about a fourth of the way from the summit of the precipice;

* A gentleman whose splendid collection of coloured drawings of native birds, mostly life-size, and all executed by himself, attracted great admiration in the Natural History Section of the British Association at Cork, in 1843.

when she flew off, two eggs, greenish-white in colour, like those of the swan, (*Cygnus olor*), were exposed to view. Very near to this was another nest at a similar distance from the top, but it was untenanted, and from its proximity to the other, I should rather suppose that both had belonged to the same pair of eagles in different years, than that they were occupied by two pair at the same time. Less than a furlong distant to the eastward of the Head, there was a nest similarly situated, and containing two eaglets. To obtain these, we engaged a man accustomed to the apparently hazardous exploit of descending precipices. A rope being attached to his body for safety, and a basket to his back for the reception of the eaglets, he was lowered to the nest, from which he brought up the birds without injury either to himself or them. The parents were most vociferous during the robbing of their eyrie, taking hurried flights, evidently in despair, towards the nest, but did not attack, nor even closely approach the plunderer, nor did they come within fair gun-shot of the rock. The eaglets were almost entirely feathered. The first layer of this nest, as well as that of the other two, was composed of strong stems of heather; being unable by looking over the rock to see the lining, I had it brought up, and found it to be the tender twigs of heath, and plants of *Luzula sylvatica*, both of which grow on the summit of the cliff. About the nest, there were many legs of rabbits, and the remains of puffins (*Mormon fratercula*, Temm.)

On the following day I saw five sea eagles in mature plumage,*

* Excepting eaglets, the gamekeeper had never seen any but white-tailed, or adult, eagles here at this season. Mr. J. V. Stewart, however, with reference to this part of the country, remarks:—"In spring I have seen the white-tailed eagle apparently paired with *Ossifragus* (the adult with the immature bird), and I have reason to believe that they breed together." He adds:—"The males at this season are very assiduous in their attention to the females, and very pugnacious in their rivalry. Some time ago, two of them near this fought so furiously for a female, who remained soaring above, that having in the contest fixed their talons firmly into each other's breasts, they dropped to the ground, and there continued the struggle so fiercely, that a peasant passing by, was enabled to despatch them both with a stick."—*Mag. Nat. Hist.* vol. v. p. 580, 1832. I have been informed of another instance (which happened in 1836?) of two eagles, that after fighting for some time in the air, fell to the ground, in a garden near Newtowncunningham in the same county, and were secured. If gallantry be really the cause of such combats, birds about to pair for the first time are probably the disputants, as from the circumstance of a pair frequenting

all that were then said to be at "the Horn." The bird which we raised from the nest containing eggs, was thought by the gamekeeper to have no partner, as he had killed a male bird a few weeks before. I gazed for a long time at three of these eagles, both when they were at rest and on wing; at first through a telescope, but as they permitted a much nearer approach than was anticipated, I had afterwards an excellent and near view of them. The head and neck in every position appeared almost as white as the tail,* and was so distinguished from a great distance, more especially when thrown into relief by a dark rocky back-ground. One of these birds was pursued by several gulls (*Larus canus?*) and kestrels, which kept closely flying after, and sometimes even apparently striking him. A gull certainly once did so, but the eagle, "towering in his pride of place," did not deign even momentarily to notice any of his puny assailants.

Here to the present time these noble birds probably still maintain their ground. I learn from scientific friends † who visited Horn Head on the 4th of August, 1845, that from one point of view they saw five eagles, three old (as denoted by their white tails) soaring above, and two young (as was supposed from their darker plumage) flying along the face of the cliffs. At Tory Island, off this coast, the same party saw two sea eagles a few days afterwards, and were told that a pair, but never more, has always an eyrie there.

Under the Golden Eagle, it has been mentioned, that of the number thirteen or fourteen eagles killed at the Horn within four years,‡ all but one individual were the *Haliaëtos albicilla.*

a particular locality, not only in the breeding season, but throughout the year, it would seem that the species is monogamous, or pairs for life.

* The colour of the head and neck in preserved specimens of adult birds, (having the tail pure white,) examined by me, have presented considerable difference in this respect, and, though none had this portion of plumage altogether white, yet some were marked so faintly with very pale ash-grey, as to exhibit the appearance of soiled white, which, contrasted with the dark hue of the back and wings, gives from a distance the appearance above described.

† Mr. Edmund Getty, Mr. Geo. C. Hyndman, and Mr. John Grattan, three of the most valuable members of the Scientific and Literary Institutions of Belfast.

‡ The reward alone could hardly have prompted the destruction of this number,—one shilling a head only being given by the proprietor of the Horn for them.

I was informed by a gentleman resident at Dunfanaghy, the village nearest to Horn Head, that in winter the sea eagle is comparatively numerous, and that he has sometimes seen as many as six or seven in company on the strand.* They are supposed to be attracted hither at this season by rabbits, which greatly abound at the Horn. In an article by John Vandeleur Stewart, Esq., on the Birds, &c., of Donegal, which appeared in the Magazine of Natural History for 1832 (p. 578), the golden eagle is mentioned as resident and rare; the sea eagle as resident and common. The author states that he had received three specimens of the latter for his museum in addition to five living eaglets, and fully describes the various stages of plumage the species undergoes. Mr. W. Sinclaire had a splendid bird of this species from the same locality. It likewise frequents Malin Head, the extreme northern point of Ireland. At Burt, also, in the county of Donegal, this species is said to be seen every year about the month of May.

In the county of Antrim, the sea eagle has an eyrie at Fairhead, the most lofty and sublime of the basaltic promontories of the north-east coast. When visiting this place on the 16th of July, 1839, (accompanied by Mr. Selby and the Rev. E. Bigge,) a pair of these birds appeared soaring about the headland. An intelligent man, long resident in the neighbourhood, since stated, that they build annually, very early in the season, on the same platform of rock, and the number of young was always two, except in one year, when to the surprise of the people living in the vicinity, four eaglets made their appearance. These were all about the same size, and appeared in company with the two old birds. The man was questioned particularly respecting this circumstance, as no instance of the kind is perhaps on record; and although he could not say that the four young were actually seen in the nest, yet at the usual time of eaglets appearing on wing with their parents, four young birds unquestionably bore them company. Eagles are persecuted by the people here, for carrying off lambs, turkeys, and geese of tender age, as well as ducks and hens of all

* Temminck remarks that this species is common in winter on the shores of Denmark. Man. d'Orn. de l'Eur. part 3, p. 27.

ages. One which was fired at, and wounded so as to be captured, struck its talons into the shooter's arm, giving him excessive pain, and did not loosen its hold until the leg was severed from its body. A pair only frequent Fairhead, except in autumn, when the young are still there. In the Island of Rathlin, the sea eagle is said to have an eyrie. This species, as well as the golden eagle, has been taken in Glenarm Park; and, on the 6th of September, 1837, two were seen in company on Galbally mountain, near the Garron Point. An adult bird was shot in the winter of 1842–43? at Larne Lough, under the following circumstances:—A wild-fowl shooter was lying in ambush on the shore, in the hope that the flowing tide would bring some wigeon within range, when the eagle appeared overhead, intent, as he imagined, on his "game." The royal bird floating in the air looked down upon the swimming wild-fowl, expanded the claws of one of its feet, then clasped them together,—an act, perhaps, even more suggestive to the shooter of the bird's intent, than was the air-drawn dagger to Macbeth; and, before it could again clutch the air, the "charge" intended for the wigeon brought it to the ground. One pities the majestic bird falling a sacrifice under such circumstances, and wishes that the slayer had been imbued with the feeling of William Tell, as exemplified in the following passage:—

——————— "Scaling yonder peak,
I saw an eagle wheeling near its brow,
O'er the abyss: his broad expanded wings
Lay calm and motionless upon the air,
As if he floated there without their aid,
By the sole act of his unlorded will,
That buoyed him proudly up. Instinctively
I bent my bow; yet kept he rounding still
His airy circle, as in the delight
Of measuring the ample range beneath;
And round about absorb'd, he heeded not
The death that threaten'd him. I could not shoot!
'Twas liberty!—I turned my bow aside,
And let him soar away!"

J. Sheridan Knowles, *William Tell.*
Act 1, Scene 2.

In the Belfast mountains, far remote from any of its habitations, I was once, (October 2, 1832,) gratified by the sight of an eagle, which was soaring, attended first by one kestrel, and afterwards by two of these birds. The snowy whiteness of the tail proved it to be adult; it remained in view for about a quarter of an hour, then disappeared in the direction of the Cave-hill. The last I have heard of being taken near Belfast, was trapped in the Deer Park, about thirty years ago.

Late in the autumn of 1844, two eagles were observed flying over Ballydrain, a few miles from Belfast, by the same person who supplied the information respecting the Fairhead birds. When asked, was he sure of their having been eagles, the reply was:—"Do you think I don't known the yelp of them;" and truly, their barking or yelping cry is most peculiar.

When in August, 1836, at Sleive Donard,* the chief of the Mourne mountains, in the county of Down, a cliff situated quite inland, was pointed out as the "Eagle's rock;"—so named in consequence of having been at one period the eyrie of this bird. Our guide informed us, that eagles had not bred there of late years (their place being supplied by ravens), but that they annually build at less frequented places among the range of mountains. Here they are frequently met with by Lord Roden's gamekeeper, but are seldom seen so low down as Tollymore Park, where one only had been taken within the preceding nine years.† A well-known collector of objects of Natural History, who has spent much time among the mountains of Mourne,‡ stated in 1831, that he had at various periods seen three or four pairs of eagles there, and once visited a nest in an inland situation, con-

* Montagu obtained two sea eagles from this mountain, which, although 2,796 feet in height, he terms "a mountainous precipice, or craggy cliff impending the sea." These birds "were, on their arrival at Bristol, detained by an officer of excise, upon the plea that there was a duty upon all singing birds!"—*Ornithological Dict.* and *Supp.* The individual from which Pennant drew up his description was taken in Galway.

† Ten years afterwards, in May, 1846, the same keeper reported to me, that he "feared" (he then wanted eggs) there was but one eagle about the mountains of Mourne, where it is often seen at a particular rock.

‡ Mr. Patrick Doran.

taining two eggs. These birds were accused of committing great devastation, "killing a sheep every week," and very often sweeping down and bearing off a goose from the farm-yard. One of the finest sea eagles which has come under my own observation, was shot in that neighbourhood, (near Dundrum,) on the 13th of January, 1845, when in the act of pursuing the fowls in a farmer's yard. This bird was preserved for the late Marquis of Downshire, who kindly supplied me with all the information respecting it. "It weighed 10½ lbs., measured three feet from the point of the beak to the end of the tail, and seven feet four inches from tip to tip of the wings."

When in June, 1834, at Achil Head (Mayo), which is fondly, but erroneously, believed by the inhabitants of the island, to approximate the shores of the western world more nearly than any other European land, and stretching out afar into the Atlantic, is rendered sublime, less from altitude than from the utter barrenness of its desolate and inaccessible cliffs, a suitable accompaniment to the scene appeared in a sea eagle, which rose startled from her nest on the ledge of an adjoining precipice. Mr. R. Ball, my companion on the occasion, thus referred to this eagle in a lecture delivered before the Zoological Society in Dublin:— "One of the most striking and valuable results of practical ornithology, is the extraordinary manner in which the scenery where a bird is first observed becomes impressed on the memory. I can see in my mind's eye the whole scene, when peering over a precipice at Achil Head, a sea eagle started from the rocks below, and ascended in spirals to a great height above Saddle Head, which towered over us. It was sunset of a summer evening. We were weary, hungry, foiled in the object which led us to the Head, and many miles from the place where we were to get food and rest. Yet the sight of this bird in its native wilds at once refreshed us, and I at least felt inspirited and repaid for a day of great fatigue. I could then enjoy the beauty of the scene, the boldness of the rocks, the vastness of the great western ocean, dashing its waves in broken foam from the American coasts. The scathed majestic Saddle Head, the setting sun, the wild grandeur

of the whole struck upon me, and I bent my course back with a feeling of gratification, that, but for the occurrence of the eagle, would have been one of having made a profitless excursion."

Two of these birds (adults) were seen by us the next day, soaring above a lake in the island, and we were informed by Lieutenant Reynolds,* that four pair of sea eagles breed in Achil. With respect to their being in so wild a district comparatively fearless of man, it may be stated, that the gentleman just named when once shooting there, had, with his first barrel brought down a grouse, which an eagle stooped to carry off, and when just in the act of seizing, was itself shot by the second barrel. Such a proceeding, however, was more like that of a golden eagle, than of the species now under consideration.

Lieut. Reynolds assured me, that in Achil he once saw a pair of old sea eagles attack and kill a young bird of their own species, which they eat, leaving only the bill and legs.†

Although we associate the sublime in scenery with the eagle, yet where these birds are of frequent occurrence, as at Achil, they

* This gentleman mentioned that an eagle had for some years frequented the uninhabited Bills Rock, which rises above the ocean at the distance of several miles from Achil. To the fishermen visiting the place, this bird was known by the name of Old Brown, in consequence of a belief that a well-known person so called, who had committed some heinous sin, had been changed into the eagle, and doomed to the penance of living on the wild and savage rock. The idea of but one bird being there, probably arose from the circumstance of the rock being but rarely visited, and one individual only seen at such times. A correspondent mentioned in 1841, that a pair of sea eagles inhabited the islet, and from their remarkable light colour, he imagined them to be very old birds.

† A portion of the following matter communicated by my late friend, Geo. Matthews, Esq., although relating to another country, bears on some of the preceding points:— "We saw a number of eagles along the coast of Norway, from Trondjeim to the Alten Fiord, in the summer, autumn, and winter of 1843, especially the osprey or sea eagle. Some were shot. They were watchful, and difficult to get at. They eat carrion:—even the carcass of one of their own species, which we threw overboard, after being skinned, was eaten by them. Sometimes we looked out for eagles hovering over a mountain side, and on going there with our dogs, were sure to find game. We thought them cowardly, as several times we have seen a falcon attack and hunt them well. The falcons would not leave the mountain, notwithstanding our firing, if once they saw grouse on the wing, and several were shot in consequence of their following the same pack of grouse as we did. The eagles always went off on the first fire."

The difference between the actions related by Lieut. Reynolds and Mr. Matthews, may, as it seems to me, (taking it for granted that the same species is alluded to,) fairly be attributed to the different circumstances of the localities, and to the *individual* character of the birds.

are occasionally found in connection with the next step to the sublime,—the ridiculous; an example of which we have in one being shot by a man from his bed, as it was feeding on a dead pig.

We were assured by Serjeant Croker, of the Constabulary, that about six months before we visited Ballycroy, an eagle, when distant a few yards only from him and several persons, carried off a hen from that village. He was informed that a similar occurrence had several times taken place. True, we were long before told this, and much more, respecting the eagles of the district, in the Wild Sports of the West (letter 19); but I was not aware whether the author intended his admirably graphic narrative,—almost "too good to be true,"—to be understood as literally correct. It is there remarked, that "the eagle in the gray of morning sweeps through the cabins, and never fails in carrying off some prey;" * that "to black fowls, eagles appear particularly attached; and the villagers (of Dugurth) avoid as much as possible rearing birds of that colour" (p. 107). This partiality, if such there really be, is probably owing to the black fowls being the most readily seen by the eagle, both from a distance and when with all his fears upon him,—for well he knows the evil of such ways,— he makes a sudden stoop to the poultry about the cabin-door.

Mr. M'Calla, writing from Roundstone, Connemara (Galway), in 1841, supplied me with the following information in substance respecting this species.

It is common throughout that district; has its eyrie in cliffs rising from the sea; in trees growing on the small islands of inland lakes, and in once instance built on a green islet without any trees.† A pair has bred for a number of years on the marine island of Boffin, and from the nest being inaccessible, a brood of eaglets has been annually reared; these have always left the island

* Dr. Laurence Edmonston in a communication to Macgillivray's Hist. of Brit. Birds (vol. 3, p. 231), on the sea eagle in Shetland, makes a precisely similar statement.

† Mr. Macgillivray, in the third volume of his History of British Birds, gives a very full and interesting account of this species from personal observation, and mentions, that "on a flat islet in a small lake in Harris, one of the Hebrides, a pair of these birds bred for many years, although there are lofty crags in the neighbourhood."

so soon as able to wing their way elsewhere. The inhabitants of the island believe, that the pair of old birds which frequent it, not only guard, and abstain from injuring their fowl, but that they will not suffer other birds of prey to molest them.* The people of Connemara generally, indeed, believe that the eagle never takes away any fowl from about the houses in the vicinity of its nest. My informant has seen a sea eagle lift a duck from near the door of a house, at a distance from its eyrie, and bear it away, but being pursued by a number of gray crows (*Corvus cornix*), it dropped the prey, which was still alive, though much torn by its talons. This species of crow, which is abundant in the district, is said to be the "inveterate enemy of the eagle," and to gather from all quarters to harass and attack it, so soon as the royal bird comes in sight. The writer has visited fourteen eagles' nests, and robbed several of the eggs, which were never more than two in number. A few years ago it was considered a dangerous undertaking to rob an eyrie, and persons went armed with guns to protect the aggressor, but my informant has never himself been assailed, nor known men to be attacked† by the parent birds. They appear to breed for a number of years in the same nest, renewing it every season. One built in a yew tree, growing upon an island of the lake on

* This idea may not be wholly imaginary. The party already mentioned as visiting Horn Head, &c., in 1845, saw, at Dunfanaghy, a singularly docile pet bird of this species, which had been taken as a nestling the year before in that vicinity. This bird had its liberty in a yard within the village, where it generally remained, but took occasional flights to the opposite side of the bay. It did not molest any of the fowls kept in the same yard, but immediately attacked any strange fowls that made their appearance. It may be added, that this eagle not only permitted, but took pleasure in having its plumage smoothed down by the hand of its owner.

† Mr. Macgillivray remarks, that, although under such circumstances, they seldom attempt to molest their enemy, he was told of their having twice done so in the island of Lewis (p. 227). The golden eagle, he observes, is bolder than the sea eagle, and has been known to attack the robbers of its eyrie: two instances are briefly given at p. 213. An article in the Quarterly Review for December, 1845, on Scrope's Days and Nights of Salmon-fishing, contains an excellent account of the habits &c., of the golden eagle. The attack of one of these birds on a boy about to rob an eyrie in Sutherlandshire is authentically given, and the adventurer named, who went single-handed to the task. The eagle fixed one talon in his shoulder, and the other in his cheek, but with the aid of his knife, he destroyed the bird, after a very severe combat. In the Wild Sports of the West, p. 107, a graphic account

the western side of Urrisbeg mountain, was, with the accumulated materials of the nest of the preceding years, nine feet in diameter. The portion in which the eggs were deposited, was lined with wool, the fur of the hare, &c.

On the 15th Feb., 1847, Mr. R. Ball received from the county of Carlow, where it was shot, the finest sea eagle he had ever seen, the weight of which was 13lbs. He remarked:—"We have one eagle of the same character in the Zoological Garden. I would almost call it a species, if *A. albicilla* did not vary so much. The size is much greater than ordinary, and the bearing more lofty; besides, our living specimen, though young when we got it, assumed the mastery over a number of others, and has kept it ever since.* It cannot be that this is merely the female, or else in about thirty living sea eagles which we have had, we never had any but this one. There is a good deal of white on the back, and the breast is strongly and very beautifully spotted with that colour."

The species is said to breed at Lugnaquilla, the loftiest of the Wicklow mountains; and there is an eyrie at Moher cliffs, county of Clare.† It has occasionally been met with about Youghal, and has several eyries in the county of Cork; in June, 1837, one was seen on Knockmeledown mountain, county of Waterford.‡ It frequents the Saltees, off the Wexford coast, and the burrow of Ballyteigue, both being places plentifully stocked with rabbits.§ The lofty marine cliffs, noble mountains, and grand rocky islets of Kerry, are favourite abodes of this eagle. It may, therefore, have been this species, and not the golden eagle, which was seen (as noticed under that bird) by some of our party and others at Mangerton. The lofty and admirably picturesque cliff between the Upper and Lower Lake of Killarney, called the "Eagle's Nest," bears that name in consequence of its containing an eyrie either of this species or of the golden eagle:—to each it would be

of two eagles—sea eagles, if the locality be correctly described—attacking a person lowered by a rope to their nest, is given as "well authenticated."

* This bird is noticed under Golden Eagle, p. 12.

† Davis. ‡ Ball. § Poole.

equally suited. Montagu, apparently without positive information, speaks of the sea eagle as breeding there annually.

Eagles visiting Lough Derg to prey on dead fish.—I have been informed by Mr. Wm. Todhunter, formerly resident at Portumna, on the banks of Lough Derg (Galway), that about the 20th of June, 1835, three eagles visited the shores of that lake, attracted apparently by immense quantities of perch, which, with some trout and pike, ascended in a sick state to the surface of the water, and died there. These eagles admitted of a near approach, and were not disturbed by a steam-boat passing twice in the day within a hundred yards of them: they remained for about three weeks. Early in the month of July, in 1836 and 1837, when the fish likewise died in numbers, two eagles visited the place, and continued a similar time. In 1838, but few fish died, and the eagles, which made their appearance about the end of July, stayed but for a short period. My informant attributed the fatality of the fish to the "hot weather," stating that where they died, the water was but from one to three feet in depth, and consequently would be much acted on by heat. The lake generally is shallow, its average depth being about eight feet, and there is no apparent current through it.*

Eagles obtained by simple means.—Montagu relates an instance of a sea eagle being so much wounded by a charge of snipe-shot, as, after flying some distance, to fall and be captured. I have seen one in captivity, which was similarly obtained at the Horn, by Mr. John Sims of Dunfanaghy, near to whom it rose as he was returning from snipe-shooting. But, by still simpler means, an eagle was captured in the county of Tyrone, at the end of Decem-

* This fatality was probably owing to an extraordinary diminution of the proportion of oxygen in the water of the lake. MM. Aug. and Ch. Morren, in their most interesting "Recherches sur la Rubéfaction des Eaux et leur Oxygenation par les Animalcules et les Algues," state, to quote the words used in noticing their memoir in the Annals of Natural History, vol. xii. p. 207, that "At times they have found the proportion (of oxygen) so low as 18, 19, or 20 per cent., and the consequence has been the destruction of the greater part of the fish by asphyxia. On the 18th of June, 1835, (the very time when the fatality was greatest in Lough Derg,) the greater part of the fish in the Maine perished from this cause; and the same circumstance was observed twice in the pond, which first directed the attention of the authors to the subject of the memoir."

ber, 1837, when a man on turning suddenly round a rock, came close upon one, and attacking it on the instant with his walking-stick, so disabled the bird as to bear it off in triumph.

Habits in captivity. Kinds of food preferred, &c.—The Rev. Thomas Knox of Toomavara, (Tipperary), remarked in a letter dated November 22, 1837, with reference to two young sea eagles, birds of that year, which he had in captivity, that he attributed their clean healthy state in a great measure to "having placed in their cage, which is very large, a tank of water in which they have full room to wash themselves. They seldom miss a day without doing so, and the time preferred is immediately after eating: even in cold weather, they seem to enjoy the ablution.* Their food is varied as much as possible; raw beef, liver, eels now and then, rooks, small birds, and all the dead rats that can be got; the last are preferred to anything else. They sometimes swallow small birds whole, and the feathers are afterwards ejected in castings about the size of a hen's egg; but when not very hungry, they pluck the feathers off. When young, one of them would occasionally get out between the bars of the cage, and take a flight about the place; on its being confined again, the bird that remained behind chastised the transgressor, which, as an additional mark of disfavour, was not permitted to occupy the same perch with it for the remainder of that day, [in fact, was 'put in the corner.'] The quantity they eat daily was very small compared with what was required by a kestrel kept during the preceding summer: this bird was very ravenous, and when satisfied, would hide the remainder of the food given to it, in a very cunning manner."

The two sea eagles taken from the nest at "the Horn," were trained so far by Mr. Rd. Langtry, that they allowed him to carry them on his arm. When given liberty in the morning, they kept about the demesne during the day, generally attended his call to the lure in the evening, when they were put up for the night, throughout which, however, they were occasionally at large. As

* The partiality of eagles for the bath is also mentioned under "Golden Eagle," p. 12.

food, they preferred rats to fish.* When not very hungry, they, after tasting the blackbird (*Turdus merula*), showed a dislike to it, but that this did not arise from colour, was evident from black chickens being always as acceptable as others; gray crows (*Corvus cornix*) were also disliked, though magpies (*Corvus pica*) were favourite food.† On one occasion during rainy weather, they refused to eat for a few days, though at the same time they never retired to the shelter of their sheds, as buzzards (*Buteo vulgaris*) and peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) did, which were kept along with them. One of these eagles, (a male,) killed four pet birds, his constant companions in the same enclosure:—these were a white owl, a kite, a buzzard, and a peregrine falcon, that when he was tied,‡ either alighted near him, or were carelessly fastened within his reach. The first intimation my friend had of the owl's death, was its legs (all else had been devoured) lying beside the post, where a few hours before he had seen their owner alive and well. The eagle had partly plucked the falcon preparatory to eating it, just as his master appeared in view, when he instantly sprang from the body of his victim, and further evinced the consciousness of his misdeed by allowing it to be carried off,

* Fish, however, are in no little request with sea eagles. A correspondent has known a young bird to eat twenty gurnards (*Trigla gurnardus*) in a day. An eagle obtained in the Highlands of Scotland by Major Matthews (of Springvale, co. Down), and taken about with his regiment, had the audacity to drive away one of the soldier's wives engaged in washing a dozen of herrings in the river near Fort George, and made a meal of them all.

† The peregrine falcon also shows distaste and partiality to birds nearly allied; thus the blackbird and ring-ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*) are disliked, while the song thrush (*T. musicus*) is much relished, and, though it will kill and eat the landrail (*Crex pratensis*) and wagtails (*Motacilla Yarrellii*) when hungry, it is averse to them, and has in some instances been observed to eject them from the stomach. My friend, the Baron De Selys Longchamps, a very distinguished naturalist, has remarked to me with reference to Belgium, where these birds are much used at table, that the song thrush is excellent eating, and the redwing (*T. iliacus*) is also good; but that the fieldfare (*T. pilaris*) is not so, and the blackbird is decidedly bad:—the falcons, the eagles, and the Baron, are therefore all of the same opinion. According to M. Duval-Jouve, blackbirds fatten and acquire an excellent flavour from feeding on the fruit of the myrtle, in Provence. (Zoologist, Oct. 1845, p. 1119.) In the north of Ireland, indeed, these birds are by many persons considered very good, which may be owing to their feeding much on the nutritious mollusca found about the hedges and covers they frequent.

‡ When the golden eagle, sea eagle, peregrine falcon, kite, buzzard, and kestrel, all of which Mr. Langtry had at the same time, were at liberty, they never molested each other.

though any food given in the ordinary manner, he would not permit to be removed.

These eagles occasionally broke loose, and flew about the place, but eventually, after having made several circuits in the air, they would alight near the pond at which they were kept, and allow their master to lay hold of, and place them again in captivity. After one of these birds had been kept about two, and the other four and a half years, they were lost by flying to a distance, where they were shot. The latter exhibited the white tail which denotes maturity, early in October, 1836, being then four years and a half old: it proved a male bird on dissection, and weighed 11 lbs.

A few words may be given on eagles, as observed in Scotland and England. My friend, the owner of the birds just noticed, informed me, after returning from the very extensive and mountainous shooting quarters of Aberarder and Dunmaglass, in the north of Inverness-shire, in 1838, that during his three months' stay there, no eagles were seen. But on the 28th of September, when a few miles distant from that locality, he observed four old birds in company (all displaying white tails), soaring above a mountain northward of Loch Ness. In the autumn of the following year, this species was first seen by him at Aberarder, and when there myself during the month of September, 1842, I saw one on wing near the house; its tail was conspicuously white, as was that of the other individual. It is singular that all these birds should have been adult, for at the time of their occurrence, the young birds of the year are leaving the eyries and "regions round about" to the sway of their respective parents. Old birds seem also to be given to wandering at this period of the year. The following note, together with that on the Bald Eagle, was contributed by me to Charlesworth's Magazine of Natural History in 1838 (vol. 2, p. 164).

Golden and Sea Eagle, Aquila Chrysaëtos and A. albicilla.—In the more recent works on British ornithology, there is not any notice of eyries, either of the golden or sea eagle, in England at the present time; but, from my having seen two birds of one or other of these species, (though not sufficiently near to be speci-

fically determined,) on the 13th of July, 1835, about the English lakes, they most probably breed in that quarter. One appeared near the eastern extremity of the vale of Newlands, not far from Keswick, and the other at Crummock Water. Willoughby states that there was an eyrie of the sea eagle in Whinfield Park, Westmoreland; and Latham, on the authority of Dr. Heysham, remarks that the same species bred near Keswick. When visiting all of the lakes of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, except Lowes-Water, Ennerdale, and Wast-water, in the month of July, 1835, I saw eagles on the one day only.*

THE OSPREY.

Pandion haliaëtos, Linn. (sp.)
Falco „ „

Can only be announced as of occasional occurrence.†

* *Bald Eagle, Haliaetos leucocephalus*, Savig.—Wilson, in his American Ornithology, (vol. ii. p. 310, Jardine's ed.) observes respecting this bird:—"Of the precise time of building, we have no account, but something may be deduced from the following circumstance." Here follows the description of an ascent to a nest in a pine tree, near Great Egg Harbour, in the month of May; when it was found that the young birds must have vacated the nest some time before. It is added:—"Our guide had passed this place, early in February, at which time both the male and female were making a great noise about the nest; and from what we afterwards learned, it is highly probable it contained young, even at that early time of the season." In the Fauna Boreali-Americana, (part 2, p. 15,) Dr. Richardson remarks of this eagle:—"It is known to breed as far south as Virginia, but its nests do not appear to be so common within any part of the United States, as they are in the fur countries."

In the following note, there is at the same time proof that the bald eagle builds at the early period presumed by Wilson, and that during the season of incubation, it is found much farther to the south than is mentioned in the latter work. During a tour made by Richard Langtry, Esq. (of Fort William, near Belfast), through the United States, in 1836, he, in the middle of January, observed a pair of these birds flying about a nest, in the top of a gigantic pitch pine, which stood a little remote from other trees, on the bank of the Fish River, Mobile Bay. On the 6th of February he returned to the place, in the hope of procuring a young bird alive. The nest being inaccessible, the tree was cut down, and with it, one young bird (unfortunately killed by the fall) came to the ground. The eaglet was covered with down, interspersed with a few feathers. The nest was rather flat, and composed of sticks; it contained the heads and bones of mullet, and two heads of the gray pelican. The parent birds were in great consternation during the felling of the pine, and to the last moment continued flying clamorously about the nest. Mr. Langtry was told that two or three pair of bald eagles build annually about Mobile Bay, and had their nests pointed out to him.

† Montagu, in his Ornithological Dictionary, remarks:—"We have been informed it is frequently seen about the Lake of Killarney, in Ireland, at particular seasons: it no doubt breeds there." No proof of this bird's breeding either there or elsewhere

In but one instance, has the osprey in a wild state come under my observation in Ireland. This was on the 13th of July, 1834, at the Lower Lake of Killarney, when a single bird appeared for short time in view, displayed its mode of fishing, and struck at some prey on the surface of the water. The species was familiar to me, as I had previously become acquainted with its appearance and manner of fishing at the lakes of Lucerne and Maggiore. A fine specimen, purchased in 1833 in Dublin,—and now in the Belfast Museum,—was said to have been killed in the Queen's County a few years before that time. One is recorded as having been seen in August, 1835, at Oughterard, county of Galway,* in which district others have been shot. One was obtained at Garristown, county of Kildare, on the 23d of October, 1837, where it had been seen for about three weeks before being killed.† Two were procured on the 19th of October, 1839, at a pond near the Kingstown and Dublin Railway: one of them which came into Mr. R. Ball's possession weighed $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., and was 22 inches in length. The periods of occurrence of five only of the preceding birds were noted: one appeared in the month of July, one in August, and three in October.

My friend Mr. Richard Langtry, on his return to Belfast in November, 1839, from three months' shooting at Aberarder, in Inverness-shire, mentioned his having seen an osprey at Loch Ruthven in the month of August, and watched it for sometime. This bird had no sooner captured a fish than it was followed by a gray crow, which harassed it for about a quarter of an hour, when both pursuer and pursued disappeared from his view together. The crow once struck the osprey, which however kept firm hold of its prey, though unable to commence its repast. This being the only osprey which my friend had seen in Scotland, though some months there every year in the shooting season, he remarked, how much more common it is about some of the small lakes and rivers in Canada, where one would appear in view about every half hour during the day. At Mud Lake they were parti-

in this island, has to my knowledge been yet recorded, although we might expect it to do so.

* Mag. Nat. Hist. ix. 128. † Mr. T. W. Warren.

cularly abundant, owing, it was presumed, to the prey being easily captured in its shallow water: in the course of the forenoon he had seen fifteen or sixteen in that locality, where, too, the thickly wooded banks afforded them suitable resting-places. Mr. Evatt, of Mount Louise, Monaghan, has informed me, that during a sporting tour in Canada, he was made aware, as night approached, of the abundance of basse, at the mouth of the Grand River, by ospreys dashing down, and bearing them off to the woods. This was the signal for the commencement of his fishing.

The Prince of Canino considers the American osprey distinct from the European, but the general opinion of ornithologists seems rather opposed to that view.

THE GYR FALCON.

Jer Falcon. Iceland Falcon.

Falco gyrfalco, Lin.

—— *Islandicus*, Briss.

Hancock, Ann. Nat. Hist. vol. v. p. 2, 247.

Must be included in the Irish catalogue with doubt.

All we know of it, is what Mr. Templeton has stated under "Jer Falcon;"—that in 1803 he received the skin of a bird of this species, which had been shot near Randalstown, county of Antrim. But as the term Jer Falcon, according to Mr. Hancock's views, has been applied indiscriminately to two species, we cannot, in the absence of a description, tell to which of them Mr. Templeton's bird belonged.

THE GREENLAND FALCON.

Falco candicans, Gmel. Linn.

—— *Groenlandicus*, Turt. Linn.

Hancock, Ann. Nat. Hist. vol. v. p. 2, 249.

Is of extremely rare occurrence.

In a letter from John Vandeleur Stewart, Esq., of Rockhill, Letterkenny, dated Feb. 3, 1837, I was favoured with a minute

description of a bird in his collection, believed to be an Iceland Falcon, which had been killed when on wing above a rabbit-warren, close to Dunfanaghy, county of Donegal. At a meeting of the British Association held at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in 1838, Mr. John Hancock, of that town, read a paper (admirably illustrated by specimens in various states of plumage) with a view to prove that the Iceland and Greenland Falcons are distinct species. This was subsequently published in the "Annals of Natural History," as above quoted. On referring to the description of Mr. Stewart's bird, I felt certain, that according to the views of Mr. Hancock, it must be *F. Groenlandicus*, and having submitted the description to him, I had the satisfaction of receiving his testimony to that effect. The specimen is an adult male. Subsequently (in 1842?), Mr. Stewart obtained what he considered to be a young bird of this species, which was shot at Drumboe Castle, in the above named county.

Mr. Hancock kindly replied as follows, on the 1st of March, 1846, to some queries respecting these species:—

"I have had specimens of the Greenland Falcon from both Davis' Straits and Iceland; those from the latter locality were killed in the winter season, therefore I conclude it is only a winter visitant of that country, while those from Davis' Straits were all taken in the summer. I was informed by a captain of a whale-vessel of this port, that he once found the nest of *Falco Groenlandicus* with young, at Cape Imilic, Baffin's Bay.

"The Iceland bird appears to be very common in Iceland, from which country I have had a number of specimens, both young and old, and I have an egg from the same place. I have a specimen of *F. Islandicus*' in its first plumage, which was killed in Yorkshire, March, 1847. There was another young bird shot on the North Tyne in January, 1845, which I saw in the flesh: it is now in the possession of Mr. C. Adamson of this place.

"I only know of one instance of the capture of *F. Groenlandicus* in this country; it was a mature bird, and was in the collection of Mr. Ellis of York, up to the time of his collection being sold: it was obtained in Yorkshire, and, to the best of my recollection, was shot about the year 1836. I have no authentic account of either species being taken in Scotland.

" You will see further particulars on this subject in the paper published in the Annals of Nat. History, No. 10, Dec., 1838."

THE PEREGRINE FALCON.

Falco peregrinus, Briss.

Inhabits suitable localities throughout the island, breeding in marine and inland cliffs.

Eyries and Distribution.—In the cliffs of the four maritime counties of Ulster, it has many eyries, and in Antrim, where the basaltic precipices are peculiarly favourable for this purpose, nine at least may be enumerated. Three of these,—Glenariff, Salagh Braes, and the Cave-hill,*—are inland. A nest was pointed out in 1834 to Dr. J. D. Marshall, in a range of basaltic cliffs on the north side of the island of Rathlin, to which a man descended, and brought up two young birds. In connection with two of the grandest features of this coast, Fairhead and Dunluce Castle, the peregrine falcon has especially attracted my attention. The eyrie at the latter, however, is not on the same headland with the Castle, but at a more lofty one on its eastern-side.

A range of precipitous basaltic cliff, called the Gobbins, rising from the sea outside the northern entrance to Belfast bay, has been regularly frequented to the present time (1847) by a pair, and in one year, there were two nests within an extent of rock considerably less than a mile, which is the only instance known to me of so close an approximation of their eyries. Even at "the Horn" in Donegal, where the extent of lofty precipices is very great and continuous, we met with but a pair of these birds during a week spent there, when we endeavour-

* A pair bred in M'Art's Fort on this hill, in 1822, and the young were taken by a person lowered over the precipice with a rope around his body. This locality, about three miles from Belfast, is now too much frequented to be occupied by the peregrine falcon. In the spring of 1832, a pair remained there for some time, but did not venture to build. M'Skimmin, in his History of Carrickfergus, mentions its building in another inland locality, at the rocks of the Knockagh Hill, near that town.

ed, though unsuccessfully, to procure their young.* We were informed that there is but one other eyrie.

Tory island (off Donegal); the mountains of Mourne (Down); Bray Head (Wicklow); cliffs above the Killeries (Galway); Bay Lough, near Clogheen (Tipperary); the Saltee and Blasquet islands, off the coasts of Wexford and Kerry; Ardmore, &c., in Waterford; the marine cliffs of Cork; are a few of the localities known either to my correspondents or myself as breeding haunts of this species. A part of the coast, near the city of Waterford, was formerly noted for producing a valuable breed of hawks, and is still said to be held under lease, the renewal fine of which is one or more "casts of falcons" bred there. A country lad attempting, in 1831, to rob a nest near Dunmore, in that county, by being lowered over the rock, was struck at so violently by both the old birds as to be obliged to desist, and was glad to make his escape without personal injury.†

I shall first give some notes on this species in a wild state, and afterwards, when trained.

"Flights" of wild Peregrine Falcons.—Mr. Sinclaire, many years ago, when exercising his dogs on the Belfast mountains towards the end of July, preparatory to grouse-shooting, saw them point, and coming up, startled a male peregrine falcon off a grouse (*Tetrao Scoticus*), just killed by him, and very near the same place came upon the female bird, also on a grouse. Although my friend lifted both the dead birds, the hawks continued flying about, and on the remainder of the pack, which lay near, being sprung, either three or four more grouse were struck down by them. Thus two and a half or three brace were obtained by means of these wild birds, being more than had ever been procured out of a pack of grouse by my friend's trained falcons.‡ The same gentleman has

* Our object, however, was very different from that of a gentleman living so near Horn Head as to enjoy ample opportunity of studying its birds, at whose earnest request, the keeper procured peregrine falcons for the purpose of being turned out in the garden to destroy the worms and snails! As may be supposed, the poor birds did not long survive.

† Dr. Burkitt.

‡ A still stronger instance of the courage of falcons, in which they followed the same packs of grouse (*Tetrao saliceti*) as the sportsman, notwithstanding the shots fired at the latter, will be found noticed under Sea Eagle, at p. 21.

frequently, when out shooting, obtained a single grouse, which had been killed by wild peregrine falcons, but except in the above instance, never more than one.

Another friend, walking on Devis mountain, near Belfast, on the 1st of September, 1832, saw one of these birds pursue a couple of grouse for some distance without success, and subsequently kill a snipe high in the air, after a good chase. A sportsman states, that woodcocks shot by him in the south of Ireland, have more than once been pounced upon and carried off by wild peregrine falcons before they reached the ground.

On the two following occasions I had opportunities of remarking this falcon in haunts similar to those, which, according to Wilson, it frequents in America.* On the 8th of May, 1832, as the banks of Belfast Bay,† at about a mile from the town on the northern shore, were becoming bare from the ebbing of the tide, they were literary covered with dunlins (*Tringa variabilis*) and some ringed plovers (*Charadrius hiaticula*) intermixed, all busily feeding on the rejectamenta of the waves. This flock, consisting of many hundreds, to my surprise, suddenly, and without any apparent cause of alarm, took wing, but immediately afterwards, I observed a peregrine falcon bearing down upon them. As they flew out to sea, he followed them only a short way above the water, and returning without any prey, after a few bold and graceful sweeps, alighted on the beach they had left, when, with

* Mr. Rd. Langtry having heard that the gyr falcon bred on the coast of Labrador, gave a commission in 1836 to a person proceeding thither, to obtain for him young birds from the nest. Four falcons were accordingly in that year procured from an eyrie in the cliffs impending the sea, near the Moravian Settlement, Labrador, but two only reached my friend alive, the others having died on the passage. Instead, however, of the *Gyr*, they proved to be the *Peregrine* falcon. I saw them frequently during the year after they were received, and considered them the same as our native species. They were large birds, and of a darker shade of colour than usual. The Prince of Canino considers the American bird distinct from the European, which he does not admit into the fauna of North America. In his "Comparative List of the Birds of Europe and North America," p. 4, the bird described as *F. Peregrinus* by Wilson, is named *Falco anatum*.

† Several species of the Raptores being mentioned as occurring in Belfast Bay, it should be stated that the tide recedes here to a very great distance, leaving a vast extent of banks uncovered, on many parts of which the grass-wrack (*Zostera marina*) grows so profusely as to impart a greenish tinge; the whole at low water presenting somewhat the appearance of a marsh.

the aid of a pocket-telescope, I had the satisfaction of identifying his species with certainty. Again, on July the 13th, 1833, when crossing the ferry near the junction of the river Bann with the ocean, I was attracted by the near call of a curlew, and on looking round, saw coming towards us what at first appeared to be two of these birds, flying close together, just above the water. I was surprised to see the foremost dip in the river like a swallow, fly on a short way, and then repose on the water: the other bird, which proved to be a peregrine falcon, now gave up the chase, and sweeping past us, alighted on the beach at some distance. The curlew now finding it was safe, rose from the river and flew back in the direction whence it had been pursued.

On the 12th of December, 1845, a wild "falcon" was observed flying over the grounds of Fort William, near Belfast, towards the bay, where some days before a tercel* was seen in pursuit of a redshank or dunlin, for a very long time. When the hawk made a swoop at its "quarry" on the bank, the redshank dashed into the water; but whenever its enemy retreated, the dry land was sought again, and no sooner done, than the hawk endeavoured to seize it. This proceeding was repeated on the part of both, until eventually the hawk succeeded in capturing its victim before it could reach the water. On the 16th of the same month, a peregrine falcon,—most probably the same individual,—as the visits of the species are very "few and far between," was shot near Clifden, on the opposite side of the bay, when carrying off a redshank.

The finest chase by the peregrine falcon of which I have heard, was communicated to me by Richard Langtry, Esq., on his return from Inverness-shire, after the shooting season of 1838. On the first day, in the beginning of August, that he went out from Aberarder towards Loch Ruthven, he observed an eyrie of these birds in the mountain cliffs on its western side. Among those which darkly beetle above Loch Cor, on the opposite side, a pair formerly nestled. The old pair were seen that day. One

* Tercel is the name applied in falconry to the male, as Falcon is to the female of this species.

of them struck a heron, and also a gray crow that came near, though without pursuing, or caring to pursue either to the death. Very different were curlews treated one day at the end of August, to seize which every attempt was made. My friend and his companions were fishing on Loch Ruthven, when a flock of nine of these birds appeared. Immediately afterwards, a tercel came in sight, bearing down upon them so suddenly, as to be hardly seen until he had singled out and swept one of them from a height of about fifty yards into the lake. Here he pounced at it, but without striking, though it did not go beneath the surface of the water. On the tercel's flying a little way off, to take one of his bold circles when the quarry is put down, or "at bay," the curlew rose to follow the flock, and had got away about a hundred yards when the tercel again bore down upon it. Refuge was a second time taken upon the lake. This was repeated not less than ten times. The speed of the tercel's flight was considered to be twice that of the curlew's, as, when circling about two hundred yards off, he never gave his desired victim leave to get more than about half that distance ahead, until he had it down again. The curlew, though apparently more fatigued and worn out every time it was put down,—the last time hardly able to rise from the lake,—escaped, in consequence of the flock from which it came, or a similar number of birds, appearing in sight, when its persecutor betook himself after them. He very soon had one of this flock also in the water, and enacted just the same part towards it as he had done towards the other. It was put down to the lake at least a dozen times, and along a great extent of its surface, once between the boats of the fishing party, not more than about fifty yards distant from each other. The hawk and curlew were both several times within about twenty yards of the boats, and once indeed, the latter, closely pursued, took the water just before the bow of one of them. Eventually, the tercel left off the chase, though, as in the former instance, the curlew was nearly worn out. The poor bird now seeing two of its species come in sight, joined them, and they all went off safely in com-

pany.* The chase was continued so long, that two of my friends, whose taste inclined more to fishing than to hawking, resumed their avocation, though, as sportsmen, highly enjoying the chase at first; but the third, who communicated the circumstance, possessing trained falcons himself, witnessed it to the last, and described the swoops made by the wild bird as bolder, and its flight certainly more swift, than that of any trained one he had ever seen.†

My friend was told that these peregrine falcons destroy numbers of rooks; and he remarked many of the feathers of these birds, at the chief feeding-ground to which their prey is borne to be eaten; a hill top at the opposite side of the lake from their eyrie. They are said to persecute the gray crows, whenever these come in their way,—"between the wind and their nobility,"—though apparently not caring for them as food. Every day on which my friend went in the direction of Loch Ruthven, from the 10th of August until the middle of September, he saw the old pair of peregrines, their blue backs marking them as such, from the height at which he looked down upon them. From the latter period until the end of October, when he left Aberarder, they were not seen by him. The general belief, however, in that neighbourhood, is, that the old birds remain all the year there, but that the young leave it about the end of September.

Trained Peregrine Falcons.‡—Some of our north of Ireland

* When any quarry, pursued by one of these falcons, gains even the surface of the water, it is almost invariably safe, in consequence of its being unnatural for the species to strike at any object on that element. But it would appear that necessity will sometimes compel a departure from this rule, as an accurate observer informs me, that he once saw a peregrine falcon stoop to a flock of razorbills, or guillemots, sitting on the water at the Gobbins, and bear one off to its eyrie near the summit of the cliff. The prey was obviously larger than the hawk. Macgillivray alludes to this species carrying a greater weight than itself, in his Hist. Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 307.

† One of his own falcons, when at liberty, flew at and put into a pipe,—as harriers often do a hare in hunting,—a full-grown curlew. The same falcon was beaten by a sea-gull (*L. canus*?), which, during a pursuit of about half an hour's continuance, it could not seize, owing to the sudden turns, ("twirlings," as it was expressed,) of the gull, that screamed loudly all the time.

‡ O'Flaherty, in his West or H-Iar Connaught, written in 1684, remarks, when describing the Isles of Arran, off Galway bay:—"Here are ayries of hawkes," to which the editor (Mr. Hardiman) in 1846, adds in a note, that "they were formerly trained in Iar-Connaught for field-sport, and were held in high esteem. Morogh na Maor O'Flaherty, of Bunowen, in Conamara, by his will, dated 13th April, A.D.

eyries have been annually in requisition for more than thirty years, to supply different sportsmen, but chiefly my friend, John Sinclaire, Esq., with falcons for the chase.* The best time to secure the young, is just before they essay their wings, but they are sometimes taken at an earlier period, when arrayed in a costume of pure white down. They are generally three in number, but, in a few instances, four have been obtained; in which case, one is generally much smaller than the others. An exception to this occurred at Salagh Braes, in 1838, when all four were of similar size; and, what is most unusual, of the same sex, being females. Three females and one male were, in another instance, the produce of a nest; but the two sexes are, upon the whole, considered to be about equal in number,—the females, perhaps, rather preponderating. If either an old male or female be killed in the breeding season, (not an uncommon circumstance,) another mate is found within a very few days; so that the eyries, notwithstanding such casualties, are sure to turn out their complement of young. An addled egg is not unfrequently brought from the nest with the young birds, when of a proper age to be reared; from which it would appear, that there is no desire on the part of of the parent birds to get rid of it. Mr. Sinclaire states, that on going to obtain these hawks,—which is done by a person suspended from the summit of the cliff by a rope,—he has often seen the tercel, or male bird, circling at a great height in the air, with prey for the eyrie, while the female, loudly screaming, kept flying about the vicinity of the nest. The food was then dropped by the tercel, and as it fell through the air was seized by his partner, who bore it off to the young. In captivity, when growing, they eat twice or thrice as much as after they have attained full size, which they do very soon. The greatest regularity in

1626, directed that his third son, Bryan O'Flahertie, should have *the Cleggan*, an extensive tract in the barony of Balinahinch 'excepting onelie the *Aiery of hawks* upon *Barnanoran*,' reserved for his eldest son, Morogh na Mart." In High Island, also, it is remarked, that "yearlie an ayrie of hawkes is found," p. 115.

* One of these localities in Ballynascreen, county of Londonderry, frequented from time immemorial by the peregrine falcon, is called *Craig-na-shoke*, or rock of the hawks.

feeding them is requisite, otherwise they get a "taint," or want of full development of the feathers, which is evinced by a light marking on the colour of the tail and quills, and what is not so apparent, though of much more consequence, a weakness in the shaft of the feather at the place. My informant believes this taint to be apparent in the feather, in consequence of even one day's "starvation." Not only are the tails of birds badly fed tainted by a lighter marking than ordinary, but the wings will not attain within an inch and half of the length they should do; a most important point with regard to their power of flight.

Eyries in the south-west of Scotland, where Mr. Sinclaire has of late years chiefly resided, have been likewise in requisition to supply him with these birds. The inland cliffs of the finely-formed mountain of Knockdolian, in Ayrshire, called by seamen the "False Craig," from its being occasionally mistaken for Ailsa, thus paid tribute in 1839. Others are:—at Ailsa; one, in the neighbourhood of the town of Ayr; two, in sea-cliffs near Ballantrae, the one about five miles northward, and the other, four miles southward of it; also, two in sea-cliffs to the north and south of Portpatrick;—in all seven eyries. Occasionally, both in Ireland and Scotland, I have had the pleasure of witnessing flights with these hawks. It is truly a beautiful and interesting sight, to behold the intelligent bird sweeping boldly overhead, and following its master, the comparative slowness of whose motion sadly taxes its patience. It will alight on the ground, on a stone, or other eminence, be it small or great, to await his coming. The most convenient that presented itself, in an open space of moor near Ballantrae, on one of the last days that I was so engaged, was the back of a greyhound, which was accordingly appropriated, as the backs of the setters very frequently are. The hawk was at some distance when the first grouse was sprung and shot, but the report of the gun brought it instantly to the spot, when it alighted on the wounded bird. The training evinced by the falcon's thus speeding to the place whence the report of the gun proceeds, is highly interesting.

A covey of partridges was soon afterwards raised, and the hawk

being prepared for them, a "flight" ensued, which ended by its killing one. It struck the partridge near the ground. The same swoop with which the victim was felled, carried the hawk boldly and gracefully high into the air. Had the peregrine falcon not this admirable faculty of sweeping upwards, from the stoop made at its victim when near the ground, the extreme velocity of flight would be the means of its destruction, as, missing the quarry, it would be dashed against the earth. A few days afterwards, this hawk bore us company to the field, and there was a short but good flight at an old partridge, which was killed. When struck, it fell in cover, close to a mountain-stream; the hawk alighted on a stone-dyke at the opposite side, and there awaited for many minutes its master's coming up, when the "quarry" was obtained. The hawk "making to bathe," it was feared that the sport was over, but she was prevented doing so. The bad effect of bathing is the wetting of the plumage, which greatly impedes the flight.

Woodcocks have always afforded the best flights with these birds; and in hawking, I have often witnessed that singular trait in their character, of leaving their quarry the moment it takes to cover.* In this way I recollect what promised to be a good chase, being at once terminated by the woodcock's descent close to a public road, and as it could not again be sprung, another had to be sought for. When returning home, however, about six hours afterwards, a woodcock was raised from the base of a hedge at the road-side, where the bird had been lost in the morning. It was doubtless the same individual, as, unless pursued, such a place of refuge would certainly not have been chosen. Here, in all probability, this bird, had remained during the day, though many persons must have passed on the footway within a yard of it, but until coming under our notice, it may not have recovered from the fright. On one occasion, a woodcock caught merely (not struck), by a trained falcon of Mr. Sinclaire's, was carried across a ravine, and a few minutes had elapsed before the falconer could

* Mr. Sinclaire's best falcon pursued woodcocks into dense cover, the first year, so that it was difficult to get her out with safety to her plumage. His falcons, or female birds, which are more savage than the males, generally did this the first year, but very rarely afterwards.

come up with her, but even then, on disengaging the captive, it proved so little the worse, as to afford a flight of average length to another falcon. The stroke of this hawk is more fatal than its clutch. Land-rails, as well as woodcocks, in consequence of being seized merely by the wing, have occasionally been carried a considerable way by these birds without injury.

Mr. Sinclaire, when once on a visit at Redhall, county of Antrim, after having spent a week there with his hawks and gun, gave up a day specially to this sport, which the neighbouring gentry were invited to witness. The host, on going to have a view of the hawks in the morning, found, to his great chagrin, that they were missing. The falconer had given them liberty for an airing, and it was feared that the intended sport was hopeless. It was afterwards discovered, that, at this very time, the hawks were at their home at the Falls, nearly twenty miles distant, whither they flew on being let off,* but finding no food on the lure there, they retraced their way, and were both back at Redhall, in time for the chase of the first woodcock that was sprung after breakfast. Their presence was then made known by a "chevy" that one of them gave the woodcock, which it killed within a few yards of the spot where the ladies were assembled in their carriages to see the flight. The second hawk gave evidence of its presence, by joining the other in pursuit of the next bird that was raised. Six or seven woodcocks were killed by them on that day. My friend's hawks never, in any other instance, flew so far, and returned immediately to him; but they have frequently, from a distance of five or six miles, flown home, and finding no food there, returned to him without delay.

A woodcock, pursued by a falcon at Redhall, was not only killed, but split open at the breast, by the force with which it accidentally struck against the top of a wall. To the hawks themselves, casualties during the chase have twice occurred.

* Upon one of the early days of February, 1837, when this gentleman was hawking at some miles distance from his place, one of his falcons was lost in consequence of a heavy fog coming on, but she re-appeared in the hawk-yard a week afterwards; others of them have similarly returned after a much longer absence. The first flight of a falcon, given by Mr. Sinclaire to a gentleman resident about four miles off, was to her old quarters, from which she had been taken six months before.

Once, when in close pursuit of a woodcock, the hawk dashed through the drooping spray of a very large and fine weeping ash-tree at the Falls, and both the pursued and pursuer, striking against the stem of the tree, fell to the ground. We may attribute this accident to the closely-drooping branches screening the stem from sight; for it is as surprising as interesting, to witness the extreme adroitness with which the woodcock avoids contact with the stems and branches, in its flight through a dense wood. In this instance, the woodcock was the first to recover. After being allowed a little breathing time, it was able to "shuffle off" to the bank of the adjacent glen, and was generously permitted to make its escape. The hawk, when lifted up, was bleeding at the mouth, but soon recovered. On the other occasion, both woodcock and falcon struck against a large stone in the river at Stormont (county of Down), when the former, though not killed, was quite disabled; the latter was not much the worse. From three to four brace and a half of woodcocks have been killed in the course of a forenoon by my friend's hawks. During a winter, about fifty brace have been killed by his best falcon in the neighbourhood of Belfast.

These falcons have been flown at, and have put into cover, black game (old hens and young males, but not the old black cock), red grouse, partridge, land-rails, wood quests, rooks, &c.* They have occasionally been flown at herons, which, in the olden time, were the chief objects of pursuit, but were never brought up regularly to fly at them.

Of "*Memorabilia*," it may be noticed, that once, when for the purpose of grouse-shooting, Mr. Sinclaire was encamped at Mounterlowney (on the borders of Tyrone and Londonderry), a grouse, pursued by a falcon, was put down among the ropes of the tents. On another occasion, an old cock grouse was put into the house of the gamekeeper (Hercules Dean), in the Belfast mountains, and showed fight against the falcon,—the only instance in which my friend ever saw this done on the part of the pursued,—but a second

* Falcons, or female birds, are preferred to males, from being "more wicked." They will readily fly at rooks or sea-gulls (*L. ridibundus*) in the fields, which the males will not always condescend to do.

stoop, at which he was struck by the talons of the falcon, put an end to all bravado. One of these hawks having caught a land-rail (*Crex pratensis*), which it was about to eat on a house-top, instantly gave chase to another rail that was sprung, and, still retaining its first victim, secured the second with its other foot:—it bore both off together. Heavy birds, on the other hand, are struck to the ground, and there eaten. Mr. Sinclaire's hawks have occasionally struck the head off their "quarry" at a blow, but have never, like one of Colonel Thornton's, divided à snipe in two at a single stroke of the foot.

The finest flights are those in which the birds "climb the air."

Once, when from fifty to sixty spectators were present, a woodcock sprung near Anderson's Town, in the Falls, "climbed the air," and the hawk swept after him, until both got out of sight, of all persons present, except one, who insisted that the quarry was captured:—it soon proved so, by the hawk's coming down with its victim. The trial between the birds, which should be higher, was so well contested from the moment the woodcock sprung and went right up, that the issue was most eagerly looked to: numerous even bets pended on it. Again, at the head of Colin Glen, in the same district, a woodcock, pursued by one of the hawks, "climbed" until both were lost to view. The death of the woodcock was, however, soon announced, by its rapidly falling through the air until soused in the deep pool of the rocky river, called from the peculiar sound its waters make, the "Rumbling Burn." It was observed on examining the victim, that it had been struck on the back by the hawk, but not laid hold of, which accounted for its coming down singly.

Tame pigeons are sometimes flown at, in lieu of game, and afford excellent flights. One day, in the autumn of 1842, when a large party, consisting of ladies as well as gentlemen, were assembled at Drumlamford, in Ayrshire, there was some splendid hawking at tame pigeons, three of which flew admirably, and one rose so high into the air that it was lost to the sight of all the numerous spectators but one or two. The hawk succeeded in "putting it in," when the pigeon was found to have been struck

under the wing, which must have happened when it was at the greatest altitude, else the stroke would have been witnessed.

Actions of Trained Falcons when at liberty.—So well trained were these falcons, that the most intelligent were permitted to be at large at Mr. Sinclaire's country-place, and one would remain for hours together perched on the same spot. A lofty and beautiful weeping-birch, whence a fine range of view was commanded, was a favourite perch, but no matter where these birds were about the place, the call of their master, or of the falconer, was immediately attended to;—in a moment they were with him. Accustomed to be fed in the hawk-yard, they depended on being provided with food there, instead of looking for prey; but one fine bird was an exception to this rule. On flying to the hawk-yard at the Falls, or at Ballantrae, and finding no food on the "hack," or board on which it is fastened, she would at once sally forth to kill birds for herself. This falcon was so intelligent as to be a particular favourite, and have her full liberty about Ballantrae. She would take flights of several miles from the hawk-yard, and, when ranging free as air, would, on seeing her master out shooting, fly with delight to him, alight on his head or shoulder, and "put in" grouse for him. One day, when shooting with Lord Orkney on his moor there, my friend, quite unaware of the proximity of the falcon, fired at a gray hen,* which the hawk, at the same moment, made a stoop at, and was struck by a grain of shot, but fortunately was little injured.†

Peregrine falcons have occasionally forgotten the proprieties, and abused the liberty accorded to them‡ at the Falls. They have killed Brent geese of full size, which, with one wing pinioned, were kept on a pond; a large domestic cock, too, was once attacked, and would have been killed in another moment, had he not been rescued. The following paragraph relates to what may be considered fair game.

* Brown-*hen* or gray-*hen* are names applied to the female of the black grouse; the male being commonly called black-*cock*.

† In the review of a work on Falconry, in the Quarterly Journal of Agriculture for December, 1842, p. 326, there is an extremely interesting account of a pet falcon.

‡ Waterton mentions wild peregrine falcons attacking the mallards and teal at Walton Hall.—Essay on Nat. Hist. vol. i. p. 199.

In December, 1832, one of these birds, which had her liberty there, was observed to fly several times over a pond on which a wild golden-eyed duck (*Anas clangula*), exhibiting the beautiful plumage of the adult male, had just alighted, and was remarked to keep watch on him during the day. At dusk, when wild fowl betake themselves to their feeding haunts, this golden eye departed from the pond, and was perceived by the falcon, which instantly commenced pursuit. After a short chase, she seized and brought him back to the place he had just left, when, by struggling violently, he became disengaged from her grasp, and took refuge in a small and shallow pond. Here again he was persecuted by two persons who had witnessed the above occurrence, and though his wings had not been in the least degree injured, he did not again venture to take flight, but seeking escape only by diving, was eventually captured; thus affording evidence of the feathered, being more dreaded than the human tyrant.* He was now pinioned, and compelled to take up his abode with the other wild-fowl in the aquatic menagerie, a place which, in the unlimited freedom of flight, he had unluckily happened to visit but a few hours before.

Falcons killing each other, &c.—In October, 1833, a female peregrine falcon of Mr. Sinclaire's, a bird of that year, and consequently but a few months old, having got loose in the hawk-yard, killed a male of her own species, a year or two older than herself. He had the power, too, of moving at least a yard from his block. She had nearly eaten him, when the falconer entered the yard to feed them, which he did once daily at a regular hour. This female bird was "full fed" the day before, and had never got more than one meal in the day. Montagu relates a similar occurrence in the Supplement to his Ornithological Dictionary; and in the latter work, mentions one of his sea eagles having eaten the other. About twenty-five years ago, Captain Johnson, of the 1st battalion of the Rifle Brigade, then stationed in the county of Limerick,

* Birds of all kinds, when put into cover by peregrine falcons, generally allow themselves to be captured by man, rather than again venture on wing. Grouse and young black-cocks will do so; and several partridges out of a covey, under such circumstances, have lain until caught by the dogs.

invited a large party, of which the fair sex, as in the olden time, formed a portion, to a day's hawking; but on going to the mew, it was found that his peregrine falcon, having obtained her liberty, had killed and devoured a merlin (*Falco æsalon*), her partner in captivity. The misfortune on such an occasion was not only the loss of the merlin, but was two-fold, as the feasting on it prevented the falcon's service in the chase for that day. The female of a pair of fine birds once in the possession of Mr. R. Ball, attacked and devoured a male taken from the same nest, after they had been kept for about a year, but she died a few days afterwards, in consequence of the wounds received in the contest.

Distances to which Trained Falcons sometimes fly, &c.—In the winter of 1820-21, Mr. Sinclaire having lost a trained falcon, knew nothing of her for some months, nor until a paragraph appeared in a Scotch newspaper, stating that a hawk, which had for some time frequented a rookery near Aberdeen, was killed, and on the bells attached to her, the name of "John Sinclaire, Belfast," was engraved. Another of this gentleman's falcons once left him, and took up her abode at a rookery about twelve miles distant from his place, remaining there for about six weeks, when she was again recaptured. When flown at rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*), this bird always *struck down several* before alighting to prey on one. A person who was eye-witness to the fact assures me, that he once in Scotland saw a trained falcon similarly strike to the ground five partridges in succession out of a covey, before stooping to any one; but such occurrences are very rare.

In the summer of 1835, a female bird was shot near Castle Island, county of Kerry, in the act of killing a crow. A silver ring was fixed to her leg, and on it "J. Campbell, Treesbanks, Ayrshire, Scotland," was engraved. The male bird, on the following day, was shot on the nest, in an old castle, near where the female had been killed.*

We find a similar circumstance recorded in Borlase's Natural History of Cornwall, published in 1758. But all that is said on the subject of the species, had better be given. He remarks:—

* Communicated to me by R. Chute, Esq.; also noticed in the Fourth Annual Report of the Dublin Nat. Hist. Society.

"Among the first [perennial birds] may be reckoned the Hawks, of which we have several sorts: the Marlions, Spar-hawks, Hobbies, and, in some places, the Lannards. In the reign of Elizabeth, the Cornish and Devonshire gentlemen employed a great deal of their time in hatching, nurturing, and instructing them to fly at the Partridge. In Cornwall at present, this tedious science, which consumes so much of life for so little an end, is now no more, but still exists, it seems, in a neighbouring island; for being at Trerice (the seat of the present Lord Arundell of Trerice), August 25, 1738, I saw a Hawk, which being overpowered by a Crow, fell near a man at his labour in the field, who perceiving the Hawk quite spent, brought it into the house to a gentleman then steward to his Lordship. The Hawk was armed, as usual, with silver plates on its legs and neck; and Mr. Church (so the steward was called) perceiving an inscription engraved, quickly discovered the name of an Irish gentleman, and the place he lived at; upon this he took great care of the Hawk, and wrote immediately to the gentleman. The bird was a favourite, and the gentleman sent a servant from Ireland into Cornwall on purpose to fetch it." p. 242.

In a letter from John Paston, Esquire, to the Knight of the same name, written at Norwich, in 1472—in the reign of Edward IV.—it is remarked, after a most urgent appeal for a Hawk of any kind rather than none, being sent him from Calais:—"If I have not an Hawk, I shall wax fat for default of labour, and dead for default of company, by my troth."*

In the autumn and winter I have met with the peregrine falcon in Ireland, far from its native rocks, and have little doubt that the young birds of the year generally migrate. Risso mentions it as a bird of passage to the South of Europe, appearing in the autumn and departing in the spring.† About the marine cliffs at Navarino, I saw this species on the 29th April, 1841, and believed it to be breeding there.‡

* Fenn's Original Letters, &c., vol. 2, p. 111.

† Vol. 3, p. 26, edit. 1826. See Savi's Ornitologia Toscana, vol. 1, p. 41.

‡ As Pennant, in treating of the *Lanner*, remarks, "this species breeds in Ireland," and Bewick repeats the words, it is perhaps requisite to state, that the true *Falco lanarius*, Linn., has never to my knowledge occurred in this country. The bird called lanner by Pennant, is now considered to be the peregrine falcon at a certain age. There can be little doubt that the "Goshawk" of more than one of our Irish lists is also this species. It is the only English name applied to "*Falco peregrinus*" in M'Skimmin's History of Carrickfergus. We learn also, from two excelle ntcontribu-

THE HOBBY.

Falco subbuteo, Linn.

Has once at least been obtained in Ireland.

In old county histories and other works, the hobby is mentioned, but when more than the mere name is given,—as in Smith's Cork,—the observations suggest that some other species is meant. The hobby is there noticed, as breeding "on the sea-coast." Mr. Templeton has remarked, that one was seen during the breeding season of 1800, at the rocks of Ballynascreen mountains; and another in 1802, at Lough Bray rocks, county of Wicklow. I cannot, however, but think that the male peregrine falcon may have been mistaken for the hobby in these instances, as viewed from a distance it might readily be. Specimens were not obtained for examination. We read, that it is the nature of the hobby to frequent wooded and cultivated districts, and breed in trees, though from what we know of others of its tribe, rocks in lieu of these might possibly be selected for its eyrie. In Norway, indeed, Mr. Hewitson remarks:—"We met with a nest of the hobby, placed upon a projecting ledge of rock on the face of a steep precipice, which, overhung with brushwood, formed a part of the beautiful scenery of one of the lovely lakes of that country."* The specimen, in virtue of which this hawk was recorded as a very rare visitant to Donegal,† is not preserved, and the writer of the notice admits, in a letter to me, that his case is "not proven." Dr. Harvey of Cork kindly informed me to the following effect, in June, 1848:—"I have lately got information which leaves no

tors to Macgillivray's History of British Birds, (vol. i. 182, and vol. iii. p. 303,) that by the name of goshawk, this species is commonly known in Peebles-shire; from which circumstance, and the fact that the peregrine falcon (as I learn from Sir William Jardine) has several eyries in the Moffat hills and other localities not far distant from the Border, I cannot but believe that it must often have been the bird so pleasingly introduced in the old Scottish ballads, as the "gay goshawk," &c.—See the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, and other works. The frequency with which it is mentioned, would, of itself, lead us to believe that the bird was either common in the country, or that the name was applied to some common species. The peregrine falcon, I presume, must have been at all periods more frequent in Scotland than the goshawk.

* Eggs, Brit. Birds, p. 15.

† Loudon's Magazine of Natural History, vol. 5. p. 579.

doubt on my mind of the hobby having occurred in this county. On a late visit to my friend Mr. Richard Parker, I saw, for the first time, amongst his beautiful paintings, a hawk, which I could not for a moment hesitate in recognising as a hobby; the history of it is this:—A brother of his shot on the garden wall of Carrigrohan, the family mansion, in the *summer* of 1822 (?), a hawk which presented so unusual an appearance, that he made a coloured drawing of it. The size he describes as having been between that of a merlin and a kestrel. The painting is an exact copy of the coloured drawing in all respects but size, and it certainly answers critically the description of the hobby. The dark spots on the lower parts are longitudinally disposed.

Carrigrohan is wooded and inland—three or four miles up the river from Cork."

The Hobby is called a rare summer visitant to England, but very little information is given respecting it as such; it seems not to have been met with in the north of that country, nor in Scotland.

THE RED-FOOTED FALCON.

Orange-legged Hobby.

Falco rufipes, Besecke.

—— *vespertinus*, Gmel.

Is an extremely rare visitant.

Its occurrence in Ireland was first noticed, in a communication which I made to the Zoological Society of London (in June, 1835), respecting an immature specimen obtained in the county of Wicklow, in the summer of 1832. This bird was preserved for the collection of T. W. Warren, Esq. of Dublin, by whose kindness it was exhibited on that occasion. The specimen was given to Mr. Warren by a gentleman who shot it in his yard, just as it had pounced at a pigeon of at least its own size, which, with the hawk, fell dead at the one discharge. In March, 1833, Mr. W. S. Wall, bird preserver, mentioned to me, that he had in October, 1830, received a hobby in a fresh state, from Ballyveolan,

county of Wicklow. My informant knew the species of birds so well, that the individual in question must doubtless have been either the *Falco subbuteo* or *F. rufipes*; probably the latter, as a flight of them appeared in England that year.

Very few specimens of *F. rufipes*,—a native chiefly of the more eastern half of temperate Europe,—have been taken in England, and the first on record, was procured in 1830. Their second appearance in that country was in 1832, in which year the first mentioned specimen was obtained in Ireland. The species has not been met with in Scotland.

THE MERLIN.

Falco æsalon, Gmel.

Is indigenous both in the north and south of the island.

It breeds about Claggan, in the county of Antrim; and its nest, as well as that of the marsh and hen harrier, has been found on the ground, among the heath, by the gamekeeper in various years. On the Mounterlowney and other mountains of Londonderry and Tyrone, some of my sporting friends have met with their nests, and young birds have been brought thence to Belfast, to W. Sinclaire, Esq., who in due time trained them to the pursuit of larks and snipes. In Donegal, the merlin is occasionally met with in summer, but more commonly in winter, on and after the first week of October.* The intelligent gamekeeper at Tollymore Park (Down), states that this species breeds regularly in the mountains of Mourne, where, in the summer of 1836 (when the information was supplied), he saw four of their nests. The young have frequently been brought from the neighbourhood of Clonmel (Tipperary), to Mr. R. Davis, jun., of that town; as they have likewise been from the vicinity of Youghal (Cork) to Mr. R. Ball. A nest "in the Commeragh mountains (Waterford) was merely a slight depression in the peaty soil, arched over with heather, and situated on the edge of an enormous detached rock, near the foot of the mountain."† The species is common in

* Mr. J. V. Stewart. † Mr. J. Poole.

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Kerry.* There can be little doubt of the merlin's frequenting, generally, the mountainous parts of the country suited to it. The nests, by all who had seen them, were said to have been invariably on the ground among the heath.† This species, though breeding regularly in the south of Ireland, is said to be rare, and only seen in winter in the southern English counties of Devon and Cornwall.‡

At the approach of winter, both the adult and immature merlins descend to the low grounds, where they sometimes remain until spring is far advanced. The 10th of September is the earliest date of its occurrence, to an accurate observer, in the more cultivated districts of Wexford. About Belfast, I have known it to appear so early as the end of July; and so late in spring as the 17th of April. There may not improbably be a limited migration of merlins to our lower grounds at the beginning of winter, more, I think, being seen during this season than are bred in Ireland.

Mr. Poole communicated the following note, dated March 7th, 1848:—"A merlin has taken up his residence in a small grove near my house during the past winter, and at any time after dusk I can be sure of finding him there, generally in or near the same tree. He is remarkably tame, and on being startled, merely flies into a neighbouring tree; even after firing two barrels at him, he pitched again in the same grove. I once took, as I believed, a most deadly aim at this bird in the dusk, and on going to the base of the tree to pick him up as a matter of certainty, was astonished to find that he had never left the spot at which he was fired at, but remained quietly perched there, about twelve or fifteen feet above my head, apparently in the quiet enjoyment of his night's

* Mr. T. F. Neligan.

† Temminck notices the merlin as breeding in trees, and Mr. Hewitson, when in Norway, had the eggs brought to him from a tree; he subsequently found one of their nests himself, near the top of a tall spruce fir. In Dunn's Ornithologist's Guide to Orkney and Shetland, (published in 1837,) it is stated, that "like the peregrine, it chooses the most inaccessible parts of the rocks for breeding places," p. 75. The merlin and peregrine falcon were the only species of hawks met with by the author in those islands.

‡ Yarrell, Brit. Birds.

repose. After some time he seemed to awake from his slumbers, and, discovering my intrusion, quickly decamped." The same gentleman remarks, that a merlin which he once saw attacked by a number of swallows, was by no means satisfied to put up with their insults tamely, as a kestrel or a sparrow-hawk would have done, but darted about after the tormentors, and descended upon them from above in so furious a manner as quickly to put them to flight.

On March the 9th, 1832, when walking on the shore of Belfast Bay, as the tide was flowing, I observed a merlin for some time coursing above the uncovered banks, the edge of the waves being the limit to his flight. This at once led me to believe he was in search of prey, which was confirmed by his giving chase to a large flock of dunlins (*Tringa variabilis*), in pursuit of which he disappeared. The oldest of the "shore-shooters" in Belfast Bay has often seen hawks, which were believed to be merlins, follow and kill dunlins on the banks at low water. This occurred more frequently in the autumn than at any other season. The merlin's thus resorting to the sea-shore has very rarely been noticed by authors: the weather was mild in the instances alluded to.* Another shooter since assured me, that he has frequently seen the merlin in autumn, and early in winter, about the beach of the bay, sometimes even daily during a week. Its visits are, he believes, for the purpose of obtaining wounded birds; but he has likewise seen it single a dunlin from a flock and pursue it, though not always with success. In one instance, he shot a merlin in the act of destroying one of these birds. The black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus*), too, he has seen pursued, though not killed, by hawks here; but the assailants of that bird, he remarks, may have been peregrine falcons. The merlin is occasionally seen perched on large stones, which rise above the waters of the estuary.

* Mr. Dunn, in his little work on Orkney and Shetland, already alluded to, remarks of the merlin:—"I have frequently shot it from my boat, while in the act of chasing small birds on the water," p. 75. In the 3d vol. of his History of Brit. Birds, p. 322, published in 1840, Mr. Macgillivray mentioned his having shot a merlin at Musselburgh, that had just secured a sanderling, after a long pursuit. It is the only shere-bird noticed in the work as pursued by this hawk.

A person fishing in the bay, at the end of October, 1840, when about a quarter of a mile from the shore, saw a redshank pursued by a hawk (merlin ?) dash into the water, so as almost to conceal itself beneath the surface. The hawk then rose into the the air and soared,

> "And the merlin hung in the middle air
> With his little wings outspread,
> As if let down from the heavens there
> By a viewless silken thread;"*

while the redshank sought to make its escape; but so often as this was done, it was "put down" in a similar manner. Thus the two birds went out of sight, leaving the result of the chase unknown. The cry of the redshank is described to have been most piteous.

A gentleman residing at Moyallen (county of Down), who has merlins trained for the chase, frequently flies them at tame pigeons, which they kill well. Mr. W. Sinclaire has remarked to me, that when living prey was given to his merlins, they instantaneously extinguished life, whether or not they at the same time began feeding; while, under similar circumstances, the peregrine falcon has retained a bird in his grasp for some time, putting an end to its existence only when urged by hunger, though, like the merlin, when it did commence, the most vital part was invariably the first "entered upon." His sparrow-hawks, it need hardly be added, began feeding indiscriminately on any part of the living objects offered them.

The remains of food contained in four out of five merlins examined by me, were, in each, one small bird; in the fifth, were three skylarks.

The merlin breeds in the mountain-heaths at Aberarder, Inverness-shire, and has been observed in the low grounds there by the middle of August. To the 1st of October,—the time of my own departure in 1842,—I observed the species there; and about Megarnie Castle, in Perthshire, I have seen it on the 22nd of that month. One of these birds, brought to Mr. R. Langtry at the

* Hogg.

former locality, was captured in a cottage, which it entered by dashing through a pane of the window, in sparrow-hawk fashion, after a yellow bunting. This merlin was a female, as was another sent to him, which had been shot there, after having twice "put down" a ring-dove or wood-quest. This bird, though double its own weight, would have been killed at the second stoop, had not a sportsman, who witnessed the whole occurrence, shot the merlin, when in the act of seizing its prey.

THE KESTREL.

Wind-hover.

Falco tinnunculus, Linn.

Is common and indigenous to suitable localities throughout the island.

The chosen locality for the eyrie of the peregrine falcon is always of such a nature as is suited to the kestrel, which we are almost certain to find there, be the place inland or marine; but much more humble cliffs than the larger bird would deign to occupy, are tenanted by the smaller one. Throughout the whole range of noble basaltic precipices in the north-east of Ireland, I have remarked the presence of the kestrel. Where there are no cliffs, its nest is placed in ruined buildings, church towers,* trees, and occasionally in pigeon-houses. This bird is but a poor architect. When trees are selected for its eyrie, the ruined nest of other species (generally of the magpie, or some one of the *Corvidæ*) is used for the purpose; and "among rocks or ruins it seems to make no nest, but lays its eggs on the natural or artificial floor."† A kestrel, after having been kept for four years at Castle Warren (co. Cork), laid eggs for the first time in April, 1848, and when four were deposited in the nest, commenced sit-

* The only place of this kind in the neighbourhood of Belfast, that I know to be selected for the purpose, is the tower of Ballylesson church, which alone, of the many edifices of this description in our populous neighbourhood, contains a set of musical bells. (Note of 1838.)

† Mr. J. Poole.

ting intently on them. The eggs were of large size, and as vivid in colouring as those of wild individuals. This bird had not the company of any other kestrel during its captivity. Being purchased in the market, its age is not known.*

Although the kestrel is the most common of the *Falconidæ* in Ireland, I have not met with it so abundantly anywhere in this island, as it is said by Sir William Jardine and Mr. Waterton to be in Scotland and England. The former author observes :— "We know several glens where, within a quarter of a mile, there may in April and May be found from ten to twelve eyries; and, in one situation, eight or nine can be perceived at once."† Mr. Waterton remarks :—"Last summer [1835] I visited twenty-four nests in my park, all with the wind-hover's eggs in them."‡

In an extent of glen such as that noticed, we should not, in the north of Ireland, find more than one or two nests. The reason of the species being less numerous in this island than in Great Britain, may perhaps in some degree be accounted for, by the circumstance, that there are comparatively few of the smaller Mammalia on which the kestrel chiefly preys. Of the *Arvicolæ*, or short-tailed mice, for instance, of which four species are found in Great Britain, none have yet been detected in Ireland; and of the *Sorices*, or shrew-mice, we have as yet in Ireland met with but two, (or one-half of the British species,) one only of which is common.

Willoughby says of the kestrel :—"In the stomach we found beetles and fur of mice;" Mr. Waterton also writes to the same effect, adding that it lives "almost entirely on mice." Mr. Hepburn, an attentive observer and a contributor of much interesting matter to Macgillivray's History of British Birds, remarks, that "birds constitute no part of its food," vol. iii. p. 335. These gentlemen are doubtless correct with regard to the food of the kestrel, in the districts from which they have written ;—but their

* Mr. Robert Warren, junr. † Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 140.

‡ Essays Nat. Hist. vol. i. p. 261.

observations will not apply to those in Scotland, whence Mr. Macgillivray had specimens, as he informs us they contained the remains of birds of various species, though mice are considered by him to be the chief food of this hawk (p. 331). Nor will the observations quoted apply to Ireland, where, judging from the stomachs that I have examined, and other means of knowledge, mice constitute but a small portion of the kestrel's food; still, for what the species does kill of these vermin, its life should be preserved, and not sacrificed, as it is by every gamekeeper.*

Of four birds examined by me in 1838, as to their food; the first contained the remains of a young hare or rabbit; the second (killed in the middle of December), insects only, consisting of three dor-beetles of a small species (*Geotrupes vernalis*?) and the elytra of a *Carabus*, or common "clock;"—the third was filled with the remains of a bird; the fourth (in April) wholly with beetles (*Coleoptera*), and the larvæ of insects. Mr. J. R. Garrett states that to his house near Belfast, the gable of which being covered with ivy was consequently the resort of many sparrows, a kestrel came almost daily at sunset, when these birds had collected together to roost, and always captured one of them, after which exploit the locality was not revisited on that day.† A kestrel, observed by the same gentleman hovering in summer above a mountain tarn, was shot by him, and "in its stomach

* The keeper at Hillsborough Park (co. Down) remarked, when robbing a nest of five young, in the last week of May, 1848, then twelve days out, that it contained a couple of mice. The down with which the young are covered is white, but when viewed *en masse*, of a light sandy-coloured tinge; their irides are bluish-black. These birds were produced in the old nest of a magpie.

† This is quite a counterpart to the sparrow-hawk described by Mr. Waterton (under Kestrel), as frequently bearing off one of the inmates of the starling tower at Walton Hall. Dr. Burkitt of Waterford, remarks, in a letter to me, that "the boldness of some hawks, when in pursuit of prey, is truly astonishing. I recollect one evening in the summer of 1835, being struck by the appearance of a sparrow which alighted in a myrtle within two yards of me, and hopped backwards and forwards within a space of about eight or ten inches, evidently in a state of extreme terror. For the few moments that it continued thus, my attention was exclusively attracted by its most peculiar motions, but almost at the same instant I felt as if something brushed my head (my hat being off at the time), and before I could turn to ascertain the cause, a female kestrel dashed at the sparrow and bore it off." This, as well as what is mentioned above, seems rather the act of a sparrow-hawk than a

were found shrimp-like creatures, quite transparent;"—probably the larvæ of dragon-flies (*Libellulæ*), which it was presumed could only be obtained at, or near, the surface of the water. It was remarked of a tame kestrel kept by him, that when birds or mice were given to it, the eyes were always picked out at the commencement of the repast. One in the possession of my correspondent in Wexford, always refused thrushes, but accepted larks, chaffinches, and field-mice. Once, when this bird was set at liberty, it flew into a high tree containing numbers of goldfinches and green-linnets, all of which kept their places regardless of its presence. From this circumstance, it may perhaps be fairly inferred that the kestrels of that neighbourhood are not much given to preying upon small birds.* I have remarked the kestrel abroad at a very early hour in the winter morning; and Mr. Poole notes his having "observed one on the morning of the 11th of November, examining a stubble field before 7 o'clock, when there seemed little enough of light for an owl to plunder by."

kestrel, but both my informants are good ornithologists, and know the difference between the species well. The following occurrence, in which the kestrel is made the hero, is also less in unison with the general character of this species than with that of its congener. In November, 1845, as Mr. J. O'Neil Higginson was in a coach proceeding from Belfast to Antrim, a skylark pursued by a kestrel flew into the coach (the window being open) when near Templepatrick, and alighted at his back. Feeling confident that it had taken refuge from some bird of prey, he gently laid hold of, and carried the lark for some distance, until certain that it would be beyond the reach of its pursuer, when it was given liberty. A friend of Mr. Higginson's travelling outside the coach, observed the hawk to sweep close past the vehicle, but did not perceive the lark.

* Dr. Wilde, when in the desert, between the pyramids of Gaza and Dashoor, at the end of January, remarks:—"I was not a little surprised at the good feeling and familiarity that seemed to exist between them [swallows] and numbers of kestrels† that flew round with the most graceful motion, now skimming in rapid flight along the sands, and anon balanced on extended wing for minutes together, ere they pounced upon their quarry. Their prey was not birds, but a large species of grass or sand-hopper, with remarkably brilliant crimson legs. The wings and back of this insect were the exact colour of the sand, so that when the animal lay quiet on the ground, not even the eye of a hawk could distinguish it. The bird, however, marked with unerring accuracy the spot whereon it alighted, and remained hovering over it as described, till the insect again took flight, when its red legs, and the under part of the body, rendering it very conspicuous, he pounced upon it while on the wing. But neither did this hawk appear to mind the smaller birds, nor did they, as if aware of their security, seem to pay the least attention to him." Narrative of a voyage to Madeira, the Mediterranean, &c., including a visit to Egypt, &c., 2nd edit. p. 252.

† Possibly *Falco tinnunculoides*.

Mr. Macgillivray observes, that the kestrel never hovers in pursuit of prey "at a greater distance from the ground than forty feet;" but, in the north of Ireland, it is commonly, when so occupied, at double or treble that height in the air. Its elevation above the ground is probably proportioned according to the prey sought for; small birds, we may presume, being seen from a much greater height than mice.

The kestrel has been so far trained by Mr. Wm. Sinclaire, as, when given its liberty, to attend and soar above him like the peregrine falcon, and fly at small birds let off from the hand. One of these hawks, kept by this gentleman in the town of Belfast, had its freedom, and went every evening to roost in an extensive plantation in the country, about a mile distant, in flying to and from which it was first recognised by the sound of the bells attached to its legs. This bird returned regularly to its town domicile at an early hour in the morning.

Mr. Rd. Langtry has often seen a wild kestrel rise from the enclosure in which his eagles, &c., were kept, but never having observed it to carry away anything, knew not whether food or curiosity (which we frequently see displayed by birds,) may have been the cause of its visit.

Often as I have seen swallows follow in the train of birds of prey, I never, but in the following instance, saw one of them become the pursued. On September the 22nd, 1832, when walking with a friend in the garden at Wolf-hill, near Belfast, a male kestrel, in close pursuit of a swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), appeared in sight over the hedge-row, and with extreme ferocity continued the chase, losing not the least way by the swallow's turnings, but keeping within about a foot of it all the time. At one moment they passed within five or six yards of our heads. It is idle to conjecture how long the pursuit may have lasted before we witnessed it, but immediately on the kestrel's giving up the chase, the swallow, nothing daunted, became again, accompanied by many of its species, its pursuer, and so continued until they all disappeared. The kestrel was probably forced to this chase by the particular annoyance of the swallows, as they

and the martins (*Hirundo urbica*) had been more numerous on that day at Wolf-hill, than at any time during the season.

Notwithstanding the numbers of these birds bred at Walton Hall, we are told that "during the winter there is scarcely a wind-hover to be found" there. Such, also, is said to be the case in the eastern parts of Mid Lothian;* but Mr. Macgillivray remarks, that in the districts bordering the Frith of Forth, they are as numerous, perhaps even more so, in winter than in summer, adding, that probably, "like the merlin, this species merely migrates from the interior to the coast." In the north of Ireland generally, kestrels seem to be quite as numerous in winter as in summer, in their usual haunts.

I have observed this species to be not uncommon in Switzerland and Italy. The first which was seen, on our proceeding in H.M.S. *Beacon* from Malta to the Morea, at the end of April, 1841, was a single individual, which flew close past the vessel when sixty miles west of the Morea, and forty-five distant from Zante, the nearest land. We saw the kestrel about Navarino at the period just mentioned, and in the month of June met with it at the cliffs of an islet north-east of Port Naussa, in Paros, where it was believed to have an eyrie. When Dr. J. L. Drummond was, many years ago, in the *Renown* (74 gun ship), off Toulon, some hundreds of male kestrels, on their way from the south, alighted, quite exhausted, on the rigging, and so many were caught by the sailors, that for some time there was hardly a berth without its kestrel. The weather was moderate at the time. My friend kept one of them alive for several weeks by feeding it on salt meat, steeped for some time in fresh water. But none of the birds lived long, in consequence of no fresh food being obtainable for them.

The Little Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculoides*.—In a review which appeared in the Magazine of Zoology and Botany (vol. ii. p. 352), of the French Scientific Expedition to the Morea, the writer states that he had long been aware of this bird being common in Greece; that it

* Mr. Hepburn in Macg. Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 334.

is likewise so at Seville, and all the cities in the south of Spain, and as far north as Toledo. He adds, that "a very moderate flight, to a bird accustomed as this is to remain the whole day on the wing, would waft it from the western coast of the Peninsula to the nearest part of Ireland;" and calls my attention to the subject, in consequence of my having, in a paper published a short time before, alluded to kestrels, as breeding in the towers of churches,—favourite haunts of *F. tinnunculoides* in Spain. In Ireland, however, this species has not yet been met with; and should it ever appear, a "flying visit" is the most that can be expected from it.

In the Morea, I have with great pleasure watched the elegant and playful evolutions of this interesting miniature of the kestrel. On the 28th of April, 1841, during my first delightful walk there, along the eastern side of the bay of Navarino, so grand in scenery and admirably rich in varied vegetable forms, this bird was met with. On visiting the island of Sphacteria (the scene of Byron's "Corsair"), the next day, eight of them appeared for a long time in company upon the wing, about a lofty cliff rising precipitously from the sea, and on the ledges of which they occasionally alighted, probably having eyries there. When riding in the neighbourhood of Smyrna, a month afterwards, I again saw this species, as I did in the month of June about the Acropolis at Athens, and above the ruins of the castle at Patras. At the last place, a party of six was for some time observed going through their graceful evolutions.* At Malta, I remarked,—but at too great a distance for the species to be determined,—either this bird or the kestrel; which the *F. tinnunculoides* does not wholly replace in the south of Europe, as both may occasionally be found in the same localities. Every place, too, in which the latter was observed by me, would have equally suited its more northern congener. We occasionally saw both species at one view, as, in a similar case, we did the Common and the Alpine Swift (*Cypselus apus* and *C. melba*). The two kinds of Kestrel were thus seen on the precipitous western side of

* As many kestrels will sometimes be seen disporting together about the fine cliffs at the Cavehill, near Belfast. Baron Von Waltershausen—a gentleman distinguished for his most elaborate scientific investigations at Mount Etna—when at the former locality with me, at the beginning of August, 1845, remarked, on seeing from M'Art's Fort, a kestrel hovering below, that he had once found a bird of this species lying dead, though without the appearance of having sustained any injury, within the crater of Mount Etna. May not the sulphureous fumes have caused its death? The *F. tinnunculoides* was obtained there, by ordinary means, on the same day.

the island of Sphacteria, where the peregrine falcon also presented itself. The small size of the *F. tinnunculoides* readily marks its species to the ornithologist, with whom it at once becomes a favourite, and courts his attention almost like a pet bird.

THE GOSHAWK.

Astur palumbarius, Linn. (sp.)
Falco „ „

Cannot be included in the Irish Fauna with certainty.

Mr. Templeton, in his MS., remarked under "Goshawk:" "I have seen a young one, got at the rocks of Magilligan, county of Londonderry," and "a specimen [is] in the Dublin Museum." He noted also, under "Gentil Falcon" (another name for the same species), "on the 25th of July, 1809, I saw at Carrickfergus a stuffed specimen that had been shot at the Gobbins."

I have no doubt that the peregrine falcon,* a bird to which both the names just used have occasionally been applied, and that still breeds at the Gobbins, is here meant. It likewise is probably the species alluded to, as at Magilligan, for nowhere are there rocks better suited to its eyrie. When I visited the locality, in the summer of 1833, the common buzzard had a nest there. It is not stated where the specimen in the Dublin Museum was obtained.

Bird preservers have told me of goshawks, killed in Ireland, having been sent to them to be set up, but the species has neither been seen by myself, nor by any of my correspondents throughout the island. It is not, however, by any means improbable that the bird may be an occasional visitant.

* For the peregrine falcon being called goshawk, see that species, p. 48, footnote. The latter term is applied by the peasantry and others, (who should be better informed, to any of the larger Falconidæ, such as the common buzzard, &c.

THE SPARROW-HAWK.

Accipiter nisus, Linn. (sp.)
Falco „ „

Is common, at all seasons, throughout the enclosed and wooded parts of Ireland.*

In such localities, we are often attracted by this beautiful creature,—with the exception of the kestrel, the most common of the Falconidæ,—sweeping in silence past us, in a flight equally characterized by power and elegance. Approaching silently, it appears meteor-like, but for a moment, as a graceful sweep of wing bears it over the fence, and its flight onward being towards the ground, it is wholly lost to our sight. Its boldness is extreme; but this we almost forgive on account of its undaunted spirit. Many instances of this trait having been made known to me, the most striking shall be given, as illustrating the character of the species.

A keen-sighted friend has mentioned, what, indeed, is not uncommon with respect to the celerity of the flight of the sparrow-hawk;—one sweeping closely past him towards a flock of wag-tails, and bearing a victim away so suddenly, that he could not tell whether it was seized on the ground, or on the wing.

As remarked by Robert Evatt, Esq., Mount Louise, county of Monaghan:—

"When the flocks of linnets, chaffinches, and other little birds assemble of a winter evening to roost among the laurels and young spruce round the house, and their happy noisy chatter tells us what a fuss they are making about their perching-places, the sparrow-hawk comes through the midst of them, from some unexpected quarter, and scatters them like chaff before the wind. The first intimation of his presence is often his departure, and the death screech of his captive.

"The old birds are constantly seen darting through the woods after young thrushes and black-birds, then alighting on the bough

* I have, both in Ireland and Scotland, remarked it to be comparatively scarce in wild and unenclosed districts, though containing abundance of wood.

of a tree, and making another stoop. The rapidity of their movements, and the sudden turns which they make to avoid coming in contact with the branches, is truly astonishing. Although he glides like an arrow through the wood, the sparrow-hawk falls more frequently before cock-shooting parties than other birds of prey. True, his quick perceptions give him full notice of the sportsman's advance with his noisy beaters; yet all the "feathered songsters of the grove" being just then in confusion, he hovers about to take advantage of their unguarded movements, until some sportsman brings him to the ground.

"Very often, of a summer evening, the shrill whistle of some little bird directs attention to the sparrow-hawk as he returns home, flying high in air, with a bird in his talons. I am inclined to think they carry their prey considerable distances, having often watched them flying off with it, at a good height, and in a straight line, until they left my sight in the direction of some woods. Nor does the male bird always make his repast in peace, for in July last, while riding along a road through a wood, two sparrow-hawks crossed me about twenty times. One had some small bird in his talons; the other hawk (a female, perhaps his own partner), followed him everywhere, while he twisted and turned in all directions, throwing her out at the turns. I watched them for a quarter of an hour, and then rode on.

"A sparrow-hawk robbed me of a little snow-white pea-fowl, a few days old,—the only white one in a brood of five,—singling it out from the others while they were all being fed by a lady at her hall-door steps."

As a gamekeeper at Ormeau, the seat of the Marquis of Donegal, near Belfast, was one day feeding young pheasants, a sparrow-hawk swept close past his feet, and bore off one of the innocents. On attempting, the next day, to repeat the same feat of dexterity, its life fell a sacrifice; the keeper, in expectation of another visit, having come armed with his gun to the feeding-ground.

At the end of October, 1840, as two shooters, in a boat in Belfast bay, had just fired at and killed a few dunlins (*Tringa va-*

riabilis), a male sparrow-hawk dashed through the smoke the moment after the discharge, poised himself beautifully, so that he might not be wetted by "the stoop," drooped his legs, and with the talons of both feet seizing one of the victims from the surface of the water, bore it off to the trees on the shore. He was within a near shot of the fowlers in the boat, but, fortunately for the bold pilferer, no second gun was charged, or he might have paid the penalty with his life. This species has been shot on the zostera banks of the bay, at low water, when in pursuit of prey.

Boldness about houses, &c.—In October, 1833, Dr. J. D. Marshall received an old female sparrow-hawk, which, in pursuit of a thrush (*Turdus musicus*), followed it into a cottage in the neighbourhood of Belfast, where both were secured. On some stuffed birds being placed near this hawk, she dashed fiercely at them. Bent on spoliation, the sparrow-hawk scruples not to enter even the church itself; a male bird having, some years ago, been caught by the sexton in Newtownbreda church (co. Down), whither it had pursued a robin.*

A correspondent once received a fine female bird which was shot in a little garden in the centre of the town of Clonmel, where, some doves in a cage attracting her attention, she had made attempts to tear one of them out through the bars. To kill a little bird in its cage, remarks Mr. Evatt, is, with the sparrow-hawk, a very common practice. Even within a room with closed windows, caged birds are not free from its attacks. Some years ago, at Springvale, county of Down, one dashed through a pane of the drawing-room window at a small bird caged within, to the no little alarm and astonishment of several members of the family. An observant friend, when one day driving into Belfast, remarked, almost immediately in front of the vehicle, a sparrow-hawk to dash down at a fieldfare, and strike the ground with so much vio-

* The peregrine falcon, though much more powerful, does not carry its boldness to such extremes as the sparrow-hawk. An instance may be given:—One day in the middle of August, when on the elevated downs above Steephill Castle, Isle of Wight, I was astonished by a sudden rush of wind near me, and on turning my eyes instantaneously to the quarter whence it came, saw an old male peregrine falcon swoop at a wheatear on the ground, about ten paces from me; but he did not seize the bird, evidently from being deterred by my proximity.

lence as to raise a cloud of dust. It rolled over the body several times,—measuring, at least, half the breadth of the road,—before recovering itself. It is not, therefore, surprising that this species should sometimes fall a victim to its temerity. On the 12th of August, 1847, an adult male was killed by flying against one of the windows of Belfast College, about seven o'clock in the evening. It was seen by some of the boys outside of the building, to strike against, and break the window, in pursuit of a small bird, which, however, by some means escaped. The porter, hearing the crash of glass, hurried instantly to the room, and found the hawk on the floor perfectly dead. The taxidermist who skinned it, looked particularly to ascertain the cause of death, but no injury whatever was apparent, except that a globule of blood was seen through the skull, upon the brain: the skull itself was quite whole. The bird had evidently died of concussion of the brain.

Efforts of its intended victims to escape.—Rarely is there any possibility of escape for the poor victims. But I remember once being astonished at the quickness with which a flock of sparrows dashed into the midst of a thick hedge, on the appearance of one of these hawks, the swiftness of whose flight seemed as if it must have secured him one of them. The sparrows, however, having timely perceived their enemy's approach, contrived to save themselves.*

* The following occurrence, though not happening on Irish ground, was witnessed by so accurate an observer, Wm. Ogilby, Esq., that I cannot resist introducing it here:—"I once," he remarks (about the year 1832), "had an opportunity, from on board a Ramsgate steamer, of witnessing a curious pursuit of a thrush by a sparrow-hawk. We were off the North Foreland at the time: the thrush was, when first seen, a considerable way ahead of her pursuer, and making vigorous efforts to gain the woods which surround the seat of Mr. Alexander, near Broadstairs; the hawk was evidently bent on forcing her out to sea, for which purpose, instead of flying directly at the thrush, he kept close in along shore, always heading her, and thus effectually cutting off her retreat. This lasted for a considerable time, till at length the thrush, wearied with flying, and probably despairing of reaching the wood, wheeled suddenly round, and made directly for the steamer. The hawk dashed boldly and rapidly after her, and was with some difficulty prevented from pouncing on his victim even when perched on the foremast. Baffled in this attempt, he retreated to the woods on shore. The thrush accompanied us for some time, and supposing the coast clear, at length flew off to the woods. Her enemy, who no doubt kept his eye on her all the time, permitted her to come within a short distance before showing himself; but I had finally the mortification of seeing the poor thrush fall a victim to his cunning and prowess."

It is interesting when the pursued fly to man for security. When Major Higginson was once riding over the mountains, northward of Glenarm, a skylark, pursued by a hawk (doubtless either this species, or a merlin), made several attempts "to fly into his breast," but failing in this, sought shelter beneath the body of his horse. He instantly alighted, and took up the lark, whose little heart was beating most violently, during which time, the hawk kept so near, that his whip was in requisition, in the hope that the lash might reach it. Inconsiderately, he concealed the lark in the heath merely, instead of carrying it to some distance, as the hawk was observed to remain about the spot, and, in all probability, the poor bird, though respited for a time, eventually fell its victim. Some years ago, a swallow in the neighbourhood of Belfast, actually did take refuge in a lady's breast from a sparrow-hawk. As a sporting friend was shooting upon his moor in Ayrshire, in the month of October, a lark, pursued by a merlin (*Falco æsalon*), came from the distance of about a hundred yards directly towards him and his servant, and alighted near their feet, apparently for safety. On reaching the ground, it was so exhausted as to be unable to close its wings.

Sparrow-hawk and Heron.—Once, at the end of July, when walking along the side of the river Lagan, near Belfast, I was attracted by the loud screams of herons, which appeared above the trees at the north-west extremity of Belvoir Park. A couple of these giants of the air kept flying above the tops of the trees with tremendous uproar, in consequence of the presence of a single sparrow-hawk! This bird was circling about, and the herons awkwardly and quite unavailingly endeavouring to strike him. Flying quite at ease, his turns were so short, and, at the same time, so full of grace, that he seemed to laugh to scorn their heavy lumbering movements. The herons' savage cries were apparently (evidently, might almost be said) caused by the hawk's make-believe attempt to carry off their young, as they were particularly violent and vociferous whenever he made a swoop,—as I remarked him to do thrice,—at the top of a particular tree. It seemed a mere play or bravado on the part of the hawk, as he could easily, in

spite of the herons, have borne off the contents of the nest any time, were the prey not too bulky for his purpose.

Mr. R. Langtry has not only observed a wild sparrow-hawk strike his sea eagles when perching on their sheds; but when his golden eagle was on wing, has seen one of these birds strike it in passing, and once even witnessed the hawk's turning back and repeating the impertinence.

Nest.—An ornithological friend, on climbing a tree, at the Falls, to one of their nests, was, when within a few yards of it, attacked by the female bird, and his cap, at one stroke, sent to the ground. He speedily followed it, lest the next stroke should be on his bare head; but replacing the cap more firmly on, he gallantly remounted to the nest, which he had been almost daily in the habit of visiting, and was gratified with the sight of four young birds, that day hatched. The boldness of the parent was now accounted for. The young were described as beautiful in their first garb of snow-white down. Early in the month of June they generally make their appearance. A pair of these birds inhabited a wooded glen there, in which they bred regularly for many years, until one of them was trapped, when its partner deserted the place: had this happened in the breeding season, another mate would doubtless have been found, that the great duty of the period might be proceeded with. The locality for some years from that time was tenanted instead by a pair of kestrels. Sparrow-hawks again resumed occupation, and the kestrels in consequence took their departure, though it might be imagined that, in an extent of wooded glen of fully a quarter of a mile, there would be room enough for a pair of each species; but even the smaller birds of prey prefer to have a considerable range. When they are more numerous than ordinary, we may be pretty sure that their prey is likewise so:—the balance of nature will be kept up. Although the trees generally are old and large, one nest here was not more than six feet

* A pair for many years frequented the plantations at Fort William, near Belfast, and though one of them was several times shot, no matter whether male or female fell victim, the survivor was, invariably, soon provided with another mate.

above the ground, in a spruce-fir,—which did not exceed twice that height. In Ireland, I have known this bird to build in trees only; but according to Macgillivray, "in the Outer Hebrides, where there are no trees, it builds in rocks." In Hillsborough Park, according to the gamekeeper, it always constructs a nest for itself; while the kestrel, on the contrary, takes possession of the old nest of some other bird, as that of the magpie, &c. Two nests, reported to me as situated in "dark fir trees," as flat, and consisting of little materials, were robbed here in the last week of May, 1848. They contained four young each, one brood being about two, and the other fourteen days out. Birds from both nests came under my notice; they were snow-white in the down; their irides light hazel. At Mount Louise, (Monaghan,) "it builds a rough kind of nest in the fork of a larch or Scotch-fir tree, and about twenty feet from the ground. The nest has never been met with there in hedge-row timber, nor in a detached tree, but always somewhere in the interior of the plantation." A correspondent, writing from the south of Ireland, remarks, that he has never known the sparrow-hawk use the nest of another bird, but always to build one for itself; adding, that "the structure is little more artistical than that of the ring-dove, being merely a wide and shallow platform of sticks, without any lining, except some accidental feathers of the old birds, or their prey."* These facts are mentioned, as, in some places, the sparrow-hawk would seem, like the kestrel, to appropriate to itself the old nests of other birds.† A friend at Springvale (county of Down), has frequently taken the nest of the sparrow-hawk from a tree when the young were nearly fledged, and placed it on the ground under a basket, in the bottom of which a hole was cut to admit the old birds when they came to feed them. The basket was quite exposed to view, and rat-traps were placed about it, in which, though often screened by only a single leaf of the sycamore, the old birds were captured; in snares, too, set around the basket, they were often caught. Once, when the female was taken, the male

* Mr. J. Poole.

† See Macgillivray's Hist. Brit. Birds. vol. iii. p. 358-359.

fed the young regularly for eight days, or until he was himself secured: he must have dropped the food to them during the whole period, as he could not otherwise have fed them without being trapped or snared.* It is stated, that all the birds brought to the young were plucked, and had the heads taken off. Young birds were procured three years successively from nests there on a particular branch of the same tree, though there was abundance of wood in the demesne. The food contained in many sparrow-hawks which I have examined, consisted of birds only.

The sparrow-hawk's mode of flight is admirably described by Sir William Jardine,† and a full and excellent description of the species is given by Mr. Macgillivray; Professor Wilson, too, discourses on it in his own eloquent manner.‡

THE KITE.

Milvus regalis, Briss.
Falco milvus, Linn.

Is known only as a very rare visitant.

The name of "Kite" appears commonly in the catalogues of birds given in the Statistical Surveys of the Irish counties, and elsewhere; but, as the larger species of the *Falconidæ* are in some places called Kite and Glead, as well as Goshawk or Goose-hawk, there can be no doubt that the buzzard, or some common species, was generally meant. The mere fact of rewards having been offered in the Irish Statutes|| for the destruction of the "kite," as one of the birds of prey, does not prove anything with respect to the veritable species.

Smith, in his History of Cork, completed in 1749, could hardly be mistaken, as he does not content himself with stating that "the kite is distinguished from all other birds of prey by its forked tail," but adds, "that it remains with us all the year." He

* See Macgillivray, Hist. Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 354 and 360.
† Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 151.
‡ Recreations of Christopher North, vol. i. p. 90-91.
|| 11th Anne, ch 7 and 17; Geo. II. ch. 10.

remarks, however, what we should hardly have expected, that "these birds are so common as to need no particular description." But when the country was more richly wooded, and less populous than at present, it was much better circumstanced for the kite. With the exception of its being stated to have been seen by the Rev. Joseph Stopford, near Blarney, and at Ballincollig Castle, in 1827,* it is now unknown, not only in the county of Cork, but in the whole south of Ireland. A native bird, either in a wild state, or preserved in a collection, has not come either under my own cognizance, or that of any of my ornithological correspondents; but I have no doubt of the species having been seen in the following instances, as communicated to the Annals of Natural History, in April, 1838. Mr. Adams, the intelligent gamekeeper at Shane's Castle (the seat of Earl O'Neil, on the borders of Lough Neagh), informed me, that "in cold weather," about eight years before that period, he had seen a kite on two or three occasions, hovering over Glenarm Park (Antrim); and that in March, 1835, his attention was called to a strange bird, which appeared for three successive days in Shane's Castle park, that proved to be of this species. In both instances, the forked tail served for specific distinction:—neither bird was obtained. My informant knew the species well, from having taken it frequently in Northamptonshire: he described it accurately to me. I had before heard from an old gamekeeper, who had lived for many years at Shane's Castle, of a few kites "with tails forked like swallows" having been killed there. My friend, William Ogilby, Esq., in one instance, many years ago, saw this species in the county of Londonderry.

Mr. Richard Langtry, when at Loch Awe in Argyleshire, early in the summer of 1833, procured from the nest two young kites, which proved a highly interesting addition to his aviary. They at once became very tame and familiar, and were so gentle in disposition as to be most engaging. Every morning they had their liberty, and never flew far away, but soaring to a great height in the air, "in still repeated circles," displayed their peculiar and graceful flight. To either lure or "fist" they always returned

* Communicated by that gentleman to Dr. Harvey of Cork.

when called. Mice were preferred by them to birds or any other food. When these kites were on wing, rats let off from the cage-trap were expertly caught by them. At the shooting-quarters of Aberarder, in Inverness-shire, a locality apparently well suited to the kite, only one bird was seen by the last-named gentleman during the three autumnal months of 1838 and 1839.

I have met with this most interesting bird amid fine scenery in the west of Scotland;—in the deer-park at Inverary, and towards the head of the beautiful valley of Glenapp, Ayrshire. In the summer of 1826 I observed it in Switzerland and Italy; and in the celebrated Black Forest of Germany, it was particularly common, admitting there of a close approach without exhibiting any fear.

THE BUZZARD.

Buteo vulgaris, Bechst.
Falco buteo, Linn.

Is generally to be found in suitable localities.

Specimens sent to bird-preservers in Belfast, at all seasons of the year, from the most extensive and best wooded demesnes in Down and Antrim, have come under my notice. In such haunts the buzzard builds in trees. But in the retired and mountainous parts of the country, where not a tree is to be found, it is equally at home, and forms its nest in the cliffs. This bird has a fine appearance when soaring high up towards the blue heaven in a bright summer day. The first exclamation of the ordinary spectator, at the moment of so beholding it, is—"an eagle,"—which the buzzard, indeed, strongly resembles in general contour, more especially in the comparatively roundish outline of its expanded wings; but to the eye of the ornithologist, the size at once marks it as a much humbler species, however like the royal bird it may soar.

When at Rosheen mountain, near Dunfanaghy,—before mentioned as having contained an eyrie of the golden eagle,—in June, 1832, we saw a pair of buzzards, and heard their young call from the nest on a ledge of rock, midway down a precipice. This site,

until that season, we were told, had been for many years occupied by a pair of ravens (*Corvus corax*), which did not yield their possession quietly, but fought hard, though in vain, against the buzzards' usurpation. My companion being desirous of obtaining the young birds, a man undertook to descend the rock for them in the ordinary way, being secured from falling by a rope fastened about his body, and held by persons above. However, from its impending at the summit, this was rather perilous, and for greater safety he preferred ascending from the base; the preventive just mentioned against accidents being in this case likewise resorted to. When the least apprehension of danger was manifested, we endeavoured to dissuade him altogether from the attempt, but his father, an old gray-haired man, insisted, though gain was never thought of, that he should not turn craven, and was so eager in leaning over the cliff to direct his son's movements, that we verily feared his own life would become a sacrifice; but all expostulation was in vain. Three young birds were taken; a fourth escaped by flight. The climber said the nest was composed of the strong stems of heather and roots of grasses, and lined with the fur of hares and rabbits; and would have held several more than the four birds it contained. The legs of rabbits and hares were lying about it. The buzzard is said to be common in Donegal.*

When at Macgilligan, in the county of Londonderry, in July, 1833, I observed a buzzard soaring about the basaltic precipices, and flying from one pinnacle of rock to another, its young being all the while very vociferous. The call of one of them loudly heard above the others, being similar to that of the male bird brought from Donegal in the preceding year, satisfied me respecting the species. The continual and loud cry of the latter bird, as we drove slowly from Dunfanaghy to the city of Londonderry, proved ludicrously annoying to us, by giving evidence of the contents of our baskets to the crowds of persons we met,—it being a holiday,—and thus drawing their attention towards us. The other two buzzards and the eagles, which shared the conveyance with us, remained generally quiet. These three buzzards, but

* Mr. J. V. Stewart.

especially the male, soon became very familiar. When let off in the morning, his favourite perch was upon some stacks of grain, where he remained patiently watching for mice, but was not always successful in their capture, as he sometimes dashed his talons into the straw, and brought them out empty. He preferred mice to rats, though very expert at killing both. One of his favourite tricks was to fly on his master's feet and untie his shoe-strings. He was likewise very bold; and taking a dislike to a certain individual, flew at him whenever he appeared, and endeavoured to strike him about the head. Against these attacks, a walking-stick generally served as a defence; but the buzzard once came upon him unawares, and inflicted a severe blow on the back of his head. This bird occasionally astonished strangers, by smartly striking them on the hat, so as to send it over their ears. He was always, when flying about, persecuted by gray crows. A long-drawn, mournful whistle was his ordinary cry.

At the headlands above the Giant's Causeway, and those near Carrick-a-rede (Antrim), I have seen buzzards in the middle of summer. At the same season, a friend remarked a couple of them at Fairhead, upon the same day on which he saw pairs of sea eagles, peregrine falcons, and kestrels, all of which are known to have eyries there. He has likewise observed the buzzard about Cushendall. A young bird taken from a nest in the precipitous rocks at Drumnasole, was kept by a gentleman of the neighbourhood for three or four years. It was very bold in various ways; among others, by flying at strangers, and, like the tame bird already alluded to, striking them on the hat, but more forcibly, as it was occasionally knocked off the head. If attacked by any one with a stick, it showed fight, by lying on its back and striking with its talons at the object of annoyance. This bird regularly attended the potato-diggers to feed on the worms exposed to view, to which it was so partial, that they were sought for at other times to give to it as food. It would only eat magpies when very hungry, and nothing else was to be had: jackdaws, too, were disliked, but not to the same degree. A bird of the latter species, shot at on wing and wounded, fell into a mill-race, where it was instantly pounced on

by this buzzard, whose entire "thighs" (tibiæ) became immersed in the water. It remained thus a considerable time, the spectators conjecturing that the object was to drown the jackdaw; which, at all events, was done. When this buzzard was stationary on its perch, the smaller hawks, in passing, often struck it. A buzzard from Glenarm Park has come under my notice: at the range of inland rocks called Salagh Braes, and in the cliffs at the Knockagh mountain, near Carrickfergus, pairs lately bred. The species has often been captured at the last locality in fox-traps baited with rabbits,—the trap being concealed from view by mosses shaken over it. From the county of Antrim localities, noticed in this paragraph, with the addition of Macgilligan in the preceding one, it would appear that the buzzard frequents, for nesting, the *inland* range of basaltic cliffs throughout the north-east of Ireland, wherever it is permitted undisturbed to rear its young. Some of the places named are certainly very near the sea, but none rise precipitously above it. In the finely-wooded park at Shane's Castle (Antrim), I have, at the end of July, heard the young calling from their nest in a large tree.

In the adjoining county of Down, the finely wooded demesnes are the buzzard's chief abode. Specimens from Belvoir Park and Hillsborough Park (several from hence), have come under my observation. The gamekeeper at Tollymore Park states, that they are not unfrequently killed in that neighbourhood, where they are known by the names of kite and glead.

Mr. R. Davis, jun., remarked, in 1841, that he had never known the buzzard to be obtained about Clonmel (Tipperary). It is uncommon in Wexford,* but not so in the neighbourhood of Waterford † and Youghal (Cork); ‡ it was never met with by Mr. Neligan in Kerry. A native specimen of this bird which came under my examination, had a few feathers half an inch in length about the middle of one of the tarsi, which was bare for nine lines above them.

The buzzard is common about Aberarder, in Inverness-shire, where it is said to breed in the rocks, though wood, of which little,

* Mr. R. Davis. † Mr. J. Poole. ‡ Mr. R. Ball.

however, is aged, abounds there: the gamekeeper's "museum" in 1842, exhibited many victims. I have observed this bird in Holland, Switzerland, and Italy:—what I believed to be it, appeared sailing over the gardens of Constantinople, alighting on the trees, evidently without the least fear of injury, and feeling as much at home as the Turk himself.

Graphic descriptions of the buzzard, from personal observation, are given in the British Birds of Sir William Jardine, vol. i. p. 202 and Mr. Macgillivray, vol. iii. p. 190.

THE ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD.

Buteo lagopus, Brunn.
Falco „ Gmel.

Is only known as an extremely rare visitant.

About the middle of October, 1831, a bird of this species was taken near Dundonald, in the county of Down, by being knocked on the head with a stick, when gorged. The occurrence was noticed at the time in the Magazine of Natural History, vol. v. p. 578. On dissection, the remains of birds, and of a full-grown rat torn into four pieces, were found in its stomach. It was purchased Dr. J. D. Marshall, and is now in the Belfast Museum. This bird accords with Temminck's description of the adult male. It has not any indication of bands on either side of the tail: a band is represented near the tip on the under side, in Mr. Selby's figure of the female.

About this time, two others were seen at Killinchy, in the same county, and one of them was shot, but, through ignorance, it was lost as a specimen. In the autumn of 1836, the gamekeeper at Tollymore Park described a bird to me, which evidently had been of this species. It was shot a few year before (probably at the same period as the others) in Castlewellan demesne (Down), when carrying off a young rabbit.

In May, 1838, I was informed by Mr. Glennon, bird-preserver, Dublin, that a bird of this species (which he accurately described), was killed towards the end of the year 1837 (?) by the gamekeeper at Powerscourt, county of Wicklow.

THE HONEY BUZZARD.

Pernis apivorus, Linn. (sp.)
Falco „ „

Is a very rare summer visitant.

On the 11th of June, 1833, a fine male specimen of the Honey Buzzard, unrecorded as having before occurred in Ireland, was shot by Robert G. Bomford, Esq., in his demesne of Annadale, near Belfast. This gentleman, on being informed of the rarity of the bird, kindly presented it to the Belfast Museum. A similar bird, most probably the female, accompanied the one that was shot. I saw the specimen when recent, and found the bill and forehead covered with cow-dung in such a manner, as to lead to the supposition that the bird had been searching for insects in that substance. On examination of the stomach, which was quite full, it was found to contain a few of the larvæ, and some fragments of perfect coleopterous insects, several whitish-coloured hairy caterpillars, the pupæ of a butterfly, and also of the the six-spot burnet-moth (*Zygæna filipendulæ*), together with some pieces of grass, which it is presumed were taken with the last-named insect, it being on the stalks of grass that the pupæ of this species of *Zygæna* are chiefly found. This insectivorous food must have been a matter of choice to the honey buzzard, the bird being in the full vigour of its powers, and the district in which it was killed abounding with such birds, as, were they its natural or wished-for prey, it might have easily captured and destroyed.

The individual thus dwelt upon, and of which a notice appeared in the Magazine of Natural History for 1833, vol. vi. p. 447, was a mature male. The bands on the tail exhibited a greater inequality than is represented in any figure I have seen, the first and second being less than an inch apart; the third, more than two inches and a half distant from the second band.

In the summer of 1838, a honey buzzard, shot in the grounds about Kilruddery House, in the county of Wicklow, the seat of the Earl of Meath, came into the possession of T. W. Warren, Esq. of Dublin. A second individual was in company with it,

and remained about the place for weeks after its supposed partner's death. This species has occasionally bred in England. On the 7th of June, 1839, an adult male was shot on the county of Antrim strand of Belfast bay, and purchased by Richard Langtry, Esq. The food in its stomach consisted of coleopterous insects only. A specimen of the honey buzzard was sent in a recent state from Gorey, county of Wexford, in the summer or autumn of 1841, to Mr. Glennon, bird-preserver, Dublin.*

Mr. Selby, in the Berwickshire Club Report for 1836, p. 109, gives a very interesting account of one of these birds, which was observed and trapped in his demesne at Twizel, Northumberland.

THE MARSH HARRIER.

Moor Buzzard.

Circus æruginosus, Linn, (sp.)—*Circus rufus*, Gmel. (sp.)
Falco „ „ *Falco* „ „

Is found in suitable localities over the island, and is resident.

This species appears, as from the nature of the country might be expected, of more frequent occurrence in Ireland than in Scotland. Sir William Jardine informs us that in the latter country, it is "rare generally," and "would also seem to be partially migratory."† Mr. Macgillivray observes, that it "must be very rare in the northern and middle divisions" of Scotland, and that "none of the bird-stuffers in Edinburgh have had a specimen for at least five years back."‡ (1840.) Specimens have not very unfrequently come under my inspection at the bird-preservers' in Belfast. I have, in the course of the last fifteen years, known about twenty of them to be killed in Antrim and Down, within the same number of miles from Belfast. They were obtained at all seasons except summer, and chiefly in the low grounds. The last marsh harriers that came under my notice, were an adult pair, which were shot close to the Main-water, at

* Mr. T. W. Warren, † Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 239.
‡ Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 385.

Killagan, on the 20th of August, 1847, by George Hutchinson, Esq., of Ballymoney. They sprung together, in the evening, from a little hillock rising above a marsh in which he had killed some wild ducks and snipes, and were brought down "right and left" —one with each barrel. They were kindly sent to the Belfast Museum, and are preserved in the collection. This species breeds in the heath at Claggan (Antrim.)

An adult male, fired at and wounded, in August, 1837, at a small lake near Ballynahinch (Down), ejected two young water-hens when captured. One killed on the moor near Tollymore Park, in August, 1836, was shown to me by the gamekeeper as a bird he had not before (during nine years) met with in that neighbourhood; which is indeed too mountainous to be much frequented by the marsh harrier. The stomach of the bird alluded to was filled with frogs. Many years ago, a friend saw two of their nests on the ground in Island Mahee and Island Reagh, Strangford Lough, and shot the females rising from them; in each nest four eggs were found.

Some years since, a brood, consisting of three or four young birds was brought to Belfast from the mountains of Ballynascreen, in Londonderry; and Wm. Ogilby, Esq., procured, in 1842, an old marsh harrier, which had been taken by means of a noose, at its nest in Glenshane, near Dungiven, in that county. This bird, being uninjured, was sent to the splendid menagerie at Knowsley, the seat of the Earl of Derby.

At the commencement of the grouse-shooting season, many years ago, a late nest was found on the ground among the heath, on the mountains of Mounterlowney, in Tyrone, by an old sporting friend. This gentleman remarks, that he has often seen the marsh harrier "quarter" its ground like a setting-dog, as the hen harrier is well known to do, and that he considers his performance in this way equal to that of the latter species. Within the last few years, its nests have been met with in another part of that county. None of the mountains alluded to as breeding-places are of an Alpine character,* but all are heath-clad, such as we

* See Jardine's Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 239

find inhabited by the red grouse. The species is very rare in the north-west of Donegal.* A brood of these birds, taken some years ago from a nest on the mountains of the county of Monaghan, was reared by Captain Bonham of the 10th Hussars, for the purpose of being tried in falconry; but they proved very intractable. A gentleman, who resided in the last named county, has informed me of the following circumstance:—A "large hawk" (most probably a marsh harrier) having pounced upon a water-hen (*Gallinula chloropus*) which was swimming among some reeds at the edge of a lake near his house, he fired at it when carrying off its prey, which was instantly dropped into the lake. The hawk, although apparently uninjured by the shot, did not attempt to recover the bird from the water, but perched on a tree, remained for several hours, patiently watching it until wafted by the light wind ashore, when the quarry was recaptured.

When in Dublin, in August, 1836, I saw a marsh harrier which had been trapped, with a chicken as bait, at Newbridge Castle, near Swords (co. Dublin). In 1838, this species was not uncommon, and bred about Clonmel (Tipperary); but in 1845, owing to the vigilance of gamekeepers, it had been rendered almost extinct in that neighbourhood.† It is common in Kerry,‡ and not uncommon about Youghal (Cork), whence young birds have been brought to Mr. R. Ball. This gentleman remarks:—"It is known in the south under the name of kite, and is also called the snipe hawk; [may not the hen harrier also be meant under this name?] One of these birds, which I had some years since, lost a leg by accident. I supplied it with a wooden one, and the dexterity it acquired with this stump, both in walking and killing rats, was astonishing When a rat was turned out, the bird pounced at it, and never failed to pin the animal's head to the ground with the stump, while a few grasps of the sound limb soon terminated the struggle."

When proceeding from Constantinople to the Valley of Sweet Waters, on the 14th of May, 1841, I remarked an adult bird of this species.

* Mr. J. V. Stewart. † Mr. R. Davis. ‡ Mr. T. F. Neligan.

THE HEN HARRIER.

Ringtail.

Circus cyaneus, Linn. (sp.)
Falco „ „

Is pretty generally distributed over the island.

In snipe-shooting, it is generally met with. The first that came under my own notice appeared when a friend and I were in search of snipes, in a boggy spot among the Belfast mountains (Antrim), when a female bird hovered above us in the manner of a kestrel, and was not alarmed by our presence, nor by that of our dogs engaged in "beating" the ground immediately beneath:—her life fell a sacrifice to my gun. The species is scarce there. On the lower skirts of these mountains, the hen harrier is still more rarely seen, but has been met with "flying through the fields, and beating the sides of the hedges as it proceeded." Such birds were immature, and occurred late in the autumn or in winter;—they were probably bred at some little distance, where there is an extensive tract of moor. At Claggan, &c., the nests have not uncommonly been found among the heath. In suitable localities, such as prevail throughout the greater part of the county of Antrim, the adult birds remain during the year, and the male is always conspicuous from his light-coloured plumage;—appearing, indeed, at first sight like a sea-gull. A sporting friend in the county of Londonderry informs me, that there are many "white hawks" on his mountains at Ballynascreen, whose nests,—occasionally two in the season,—he has met with in the heath. The hen harrier is not included in Mr. J. V. Stewart's published catalogue of the birds of Donegal, but, in a letter to me from that gentleman, has been mentioned as a subsequent addition. When at "the Horn" in 1832, the gamekeeper alluded to his having the winter before, seen a "white hawk" strike a curlew (*Numenius arquata*) in passing, and break its wing, which so disabled the bird that it became an easy capture to my informant. About Bogay, in that county, old male birds are said to be frequently

seen on the moors in August. Among the mountains of Mourne, in Down, this bird has been observed by the Rev. G. M. Black, who remarks, that the ringtail or female may be readily distinguished, when on the wing, by the whitish marking above the tail. But the species must be rare in that district, as the first adult male, at least, which came under the notice of the gamekeeper at Tollymore Park, was seen on the mountain early in February, 1845. He described it to me as a very beautiful hawk or kite, of a cream colour.

About Dublin, the adult birds have been obtained at all seasons. At Clifden (Galway), I have met with the species. Mr. M'Calla, after mentioning its peculiar flight, with an easy motion, close to the ground, and taking several turns over the same place, states, that he has often seen it attack grouse in Connemara, when a struggle will take place, the grouse rising into the air contrary to its usual mode of flight.* It is said to be rare there, to nidify in swamps, generally on the margin of lakes, and to be known by the name of sea-gull hawk. The Rev. T. Knox of Toomavara (Tipperary), informs me, that "white kite" is the name by which the species is known about the Shannon, where it frequents the bogs adjoining the river, and has frequently been seen at a distance by him. He has been able, however, to obtain but one adult male for his collection;—in this bird, the remains of a bunting and a lark were found. Mr. R. Davis, jun., of Clonmel, writing to me in 1838, remarked, that the hen harrier breeds in that neighbourhood, where the eggs and young are easily obtained. He adds: "I have endeavoured for three years past to rear these birds, wishing to have a male in adult plumage, but they always died before attaining it. In a female now living the upper mandible became so hooked as to turn under the lower, and nearly prevented her from

* A writer in the Quarterly Review for December, 1845, when descanting on "Highland Sport," (article on Scrope's Days and Nights of Salmon-Fishing) and the enemies of the grouse, observes, that "hawks of all sorts, from the eaglet to the merlin, destroy numbers. The worst of the family, and the most difficult to be destroyed, is the hen harrier. Living wholly on birds of his own killing, he will come to no laid bait, and hunting in an open country he is rarely approached near enough to be shot: skimming low, and quartering his ground like a well-trained pointer, he finds almost every bird, and with sure aim strikes down all he finds."—p. 95.

taking food; but by my cutting half an inch off it, she was much relieved, and now feeds well." Since the last-mentioned year, the hen harrier has become very scarce there. Dr. Burkitt, of Waterford, has seen but two of these birds which were shot near that city, but they are said to be not uncommon about the river Suir, near Portlaw. One of those alluded to, was obtained in the following manner:—A sportsman having killed a snipe, was in the act of reloading his gun, when the hawk sweeping quickly past him, made a stoop to carry off the snipe, and when just seizing the bird, was itself brought down by the second barrel. About Youghal (co. Cork) this species is occasionally met with, * and in Kerry, Mr. T. F. Neligan considered it to be common; he had seen its nests among the heath.

When at Aberarder, Inverness-shire, in September, 1842, one of these birds was observed on wing, and another adorned the "game-keeper's museum" on the gable of the shooting-lodge. In the middle of August, I have seen the ringtail flying above the sea-cliffs near Ventnor, in the Isle of Wight. I had evidence that this bird is found in the Morea, by observing an old female near Navarino. From her being seen at the end of April, the species probably breeds in that quarter, where there are localities admirably suited to the purpose.

Sir Wm. Jardine, in his notes to Wilson's American Ornithology, (vol. iii. p. 392,) and in his British Birds, (vol. i. p. 227,) gives from observation a full and interesting account of the hen harrier.

The Ash-coloured or Montagu's Harrier (*Circus Montagui; Falco cineraceus*) is not known as an Irish species; nor has it a place among Scottish birds (Jardine and Macgillivray), though it has been met with in the border county of Northumberland. I have no doubt, however, from the accurate description of a harrier shot by a very observant sportsman on his moor near Ballantrae, Ayrshire, in 1836, that it was a male bird of this species. My friend had often killed the hen harrier, and remarking the specimen in question as distinct from it, described to me the differential characters, which precisely marked the *Circus cineraceus*. Unfortunately it was not preserved.

* Mr. R. Ball.

THE GRIFFON VULTURE.

Vultur fulvus, Briss.

Has once been obtained in Ireland.

Late in the autumn of 1843, my friend Mr. Yarrell favoured me with the information that he had received a letter from Admiral Bowles, in which this gentleman mentioned having recently seen at Castle Martyr, the seat of the Earl of Shannon, a living vulture, said to have been captured in the county of Cork. From this nobleman, Mr. R. Ball learned that the bird was purchased by his steward for 2*s.* 6*d.* of a peasant, who caught it on the sea-shore in that neighbourhood. Its plumage being in good order, tended to indicate that it had not escaped from captivity. His lordship politely offered the bird for the collection in the Garden of the Zoological Society, Dublin, but it died before arrangements were completed for its transmission. By the direction of Lord Shannon, it was carefully stuffed, and then added to the collection in Trinity College, Dublin. It proved to be the *Vultur fulvus* in adult plumage, as distinguished from *V. Kolbii,* Daud.* There has been so much confusion about these vultures, that their distribution is differently stated in every work that has come under my notice. M. Schlegel in his Revue Critique des Oiseaux d'Europe, published in 1844, gives at p. 12, as localities for what he terms *V. fulvus,* Dalmatia and Greece: and for *V. fulvus occidentalis,* Sardinia and the Pyrenees.

The griffon vulture has not been met with in England or Scotland.

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus,* Linn. [sp.] Temm. vol. iv. p. 587). Two of these birds were seen about the Bristol Channel in October, 1825, and one of them was killed. On the 12th of May, 1841, I met with Egyptian vultures in the neighbourhood of Smyrna, and two days afterwards at the Valley of Sweet Waters, near Constantinople. They were in the beautiful adult plumage in which

* A fine specimen of *V. Kolbii,* shot at the Nile by Henry Callwell, Esq., has been presented to the Belfast Museum.

the relative disposition of white and black * strongly resembles that of the common stork. They flew very near to us, evidently having no fear of man. In most countries, vultures are indeed not only unmolested, but regarded as benefactors; the Turks, however, amiably protect birds of all kinds.

THE EAGLE OWL.

Bubo maximus, Sibbald.
Strix bubo, Linn.

Is said to have been once observed in Ireland.

The only record of its occurrence appears in Mr. J. V. Stewart's Catalogue of the Birds of Donegal, in the following words:— "Four of these birds paid us a visit for two days after a great storm from the north, when the ground was covered with snow. They have not since been seen here. As I am informed that a pair of them breed in Tory Island, about nine miles to the north of this coast, it is probable that they came from that island. I have heard of them nowhere else." † Their breeding at Tory must be a mere fancy on the part of the individual who made the communication to Mr. Stewart.

THE SCOPS-EARED OWL.

Scops Aldrovandi, Ray.
Strix scops, Linn.

Has been obtained at least twice in Ireland.

The following notice of its first occurrence was communicated by me to the Zoological Society of London, in 1837, and appeared in the Proceedings of that year, p. 54:—

I have been informed by Robert Ball, Esq., of Dublin, that a scops-eared owl was shot in the month of July, a few years ago, by the gamekeeper at Loughcrew, county of Meath, the seat of J. W. L. Naper, Esq., in whose possession it now is. The specimen was kindly sent to Dublin for the examination of Mr. Ball, and

* See Yarrell's figure of the *adult* Egyptian vulture.
† Mag. Nat. Hist. vol. v. p. 581. 1832.

proved similar to a *Strix Scops* in his collection. Mr. Joseph Poole, of Killiane, Wexford, wrote to me on the 19th of April, 1847, that a scops-eared owl, which had come under his notice, was killed a few days before that date, near Kilmore, in the south of the county.

In the month of August, 1826, I met with a bird of this species, perched in what had been a window, among the ruins of Otricoli, near Rome. It admitted of a close approach, and looked most contentedly at home. When proceeding from Malta to the Morea, in H.M.S. Beacon, on the 25th of April, 1841, and 135 miles eastward of Etna, and less than half that distance from Calabria (the nearest land), a scops-eared owl, on its northward flight, came on board. It was struck down and captured, just as it had clutched a lesser whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*).

The little Owl (*Strix passerina*, Temm.), which has occasionally been obtained in England, cannot yet be included with certainty in the Irish catalogue;—nor can it in that of Scotland. On the 22nd of April, 1841, one of these owls flew on board H.M.S. Beacon, when forty miles east of Malta, and remained for a short time. Others were seen during the next few days, as we sailed towards the Morea. Early in June one was shot at Paros; and I saw another near Naussa.

THE LONG-EARED OWL.

Otus vulgaris, Flem.
Strix otus, Linn.

Commonly inhabits old wooded districts in all parts of the island.

In addition to such places, I have known this species to be shot during the dusk of the evening, at low water in Belfast bay, a mile distant from the land, by a person waiting (in a barrel sunk in the ooze) for the flying of wigeon. The white owl has, in several instances, been similarly obtained.

An individual to whom the long-eared owl is well known, informs me, that in a close plantation of spruce firs (*Abies communis*,) at Scoutbush, near Carrickfergus, he for several years had

its nests; which, in consequence of the trees being young, were placed not higher than six feet from the ground. Two nests in Hillsborough Park, in the summer of 1848, were placed about twenty feet from the ground in dense silver firs of double that height. One of them, which was robbed about the 10th of June, contained three young (perhaps twelve days out) and an addled egg. The other nest at the same date contained four eggs. The first garb of the owlets is white down, but like that of the kestrel, when viewed *en masse*, of a light sandy-coloured tinge; their irides are yellow, of a lighter tint than in old birds. Their larder consisted at the early hour of five o'clock in the morning, when they were carried off, of three old sparrows, two of which were males. About Youghal, it builds "in ruined magpie's nests."* Mr. Poole mentions, that to a deserted magpie's nest which came under his notice, when appropriated by a pair of these owls, no addition was made, excepting a few soft feathers from the owl itself. The nest contained eggs on the 14th of March, and beside them lay a dead field-mouse. Another nest, examined by him, contained four owlets, two of which were so much larger then the others, as scarcely to appear to belong to the same brood. There were no castings under the tree in which this brood was brought up. The long-eared owl is common in Tipperary† and Kerry;‡ and is noticed as inhabiting chiefly fir plantations, in the former county. With respect to food, the stomachs of three which I have noted, contained:— One, a sparrow almost whole; the second, portions of a large coleopterous insect; the third, the remains of three buntings. The stomach of a long-eared owl, shot at Killaloe, contained "part of a rat, the skull of a mouse, and the heads of two sparrows."

Dr. J. D. Marshall, of Belfast, informs me, that for five or six years, when he lived in High-street, opposite St. George's Church, he kept long and short-eared owls (*S. otus* and *S. brachyotus*) instead of cats, and found them to be much more effective killers of rats and mice. Their patience was extraordinary. At the entrance to one rat-hole, which happened frequently to come under

* Mr. R. Ball. † Mr. R. Davis. ‡ Mr. Neligan.

his view, one of these birds was always stationed, until it succeeded in killing the whole of the inmates, consisting of a pair of old, and nine well-grown young ones. They were invariably seized with its foot by the back of the neck, so that the bird never suffered the slightest injury. Living rats, too, (as in the case of the kites already mentioned,) let out of the cage-trap, and a fair start given to them, were always captured by these owls, which kept up a violent screaming during the chase; as they also did, when by their unaided efforts they had seized a rat, and, flapping their wings, hurried away to some retired spot to eat their prey. These owls had free access to the dwelling-house, and cleared it completely of mice; as they did the yard and store, of rats. They were great pets, and very fond of having their ears rubbed. When the finger was applied to these organs, they were fully expanded, and the application was so pleasing to the bird that it gently fell asleep. Mr. R. Ball had once a young long-eared owl, which was permitted to fly wherever it pleased, and by choice it generally remained during the day in a grove of tall fir-trees. His call to it from a considerable distance was always answered by a loud melancholy cry, and when he reached the base of the tree on which the owl was, it came down and perched upon his hand.

THE SHORT-EARED OWL.

Otus brachyotus, Forster (sp.)
Strix „ Gmel.

Can only be announced with certainty as a regular winter visitant.

Sir William Jardine has met with this species in its breeding haunts in Dumfries-shire, and given a most interesting account of it, as observed there.* Mr. Selby, too, considers from the circumstance of his meeting with the short-eared owl on the Northumbrian moors about the 12th of August, that it breeds on them; † and Mr. Hoy ascertained that it bred in the south-west

* His edition of Wilson's Amer. Orn. vol. ii. p. 63; and Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 286.

† "A few of them remain upon the moors of Northumberland, where Mr. Charlton

of Norfolk. But as to its breeding in Ireland,—which from the nature of the country, we should certainly expect,—no information can be given. Sportsmen and gamekeepers, whom I have questioned on the subject, know the bird only as a winter visitant. One friend, who for about forty years shot over the mountains of several of our northern counties, and in no instance was a day after the legal one (20th of August in Ireland) in commencing grouse-shooting,—always, too, having exercised his dogs preparatory to the sport, for some time previously,—never met with it at that season; nor at any other than when woodcocks are to be found. The short-eared owl is then well known to him as frequenting the mountain heaths. He has never observed it on wing, except when sprung, nor seen it pursue prey by day. It has, however, been observed to do so in Scotland.*

To the neighbourhood of Belfast,—Down and Antrim,—this owl generally comes in the month of October; but so early as the 5th of September, 1839, one was shot in a potato field bordering the bay, within a mile of the town. It remains from this time until spring. The latest noted here was killed on the 3rd of April, 1837; for a long time before that period, there was a prevalence of north-easterly winds, which, had the bird been disposed for migration, might have retarded its movements. The species is generally found in marshy ground frequented by snipes. When snipe-shooting around Belfast, a few of these owls have fallen to my gun, in boggy spots of very limited extent. The first of them that did so, being only winged, afforded me an opportunity of observing the exceeding "depth" and brilliancy of its large golden eyes, to utterly extinguish the light of which,—such is the effect of beauty,—it must be confessed, pained me much. To the counties of Londonderry and Donegal this owl resorts, in the latter of which it was not observed by Mr. J. V. Stewart until after the publication of his catalogue. Southward, it is met with

of Hesleyside, has frequently found their eggs among the heath in his own neighbourhood. Mr. R. R. Wingate has also met with the young ones on the same moors before they were able to fly."—HEWITSON, *Eggs Brit. Birds*, p. 36.

* See St. John's Sketches of the Wild Sports of the Highlands, p. 64.

very rarely about Clonmel.* Major Walker of Belmont, near Wexford, mentions their presence in winter in numbers on the mountain of Forth, whence they leave the country about April. This gentleman remarks:—"I consider the short-eared owl and the yellow owl [*S. flammea*?] the most sharp-sighted and vigilant birds I meet, and nearly impossible to get a shot at after being once disturbed, perching as they do on some elevation, or in the centre of a field, so as to command a good view around. I mention this, as it is so different from the habits of the very large owls I have met with in the forests of North America, which would let our troops ride within a few yards of their perch, and unless struck at, never flew away." Another correspondent, writing from the same county, mentions his coming suddenly on three of these birds, resting together on the ground in the middle of a large bog, waiting as he supposed, "for an opportunity of devouring snipe." Specimens are occasionally obtained in the county of Waterford.†

In the Fauna of Cork, the species is noted as not rare; and from what Dr. Harvey of Cork writes to me respecting its occurrence in that neighbourhood, it would seem to be about equally common as around Belfast. Mr. Neligan has remarked, that it arrives in Kerry with the woodcock, and departs thence at the same period; also, that the haunts of the two species in the mountains are similar. In the month of September or October,—about the time of arrival,—a friend of his once saw thirteen or fourteen in company; and from sportsmen shooting near Tralee, he was occasionally supplied with two or three of these birds in the course of a week. Mr. M'Calla, writing from Roundstone, Connemara, in October, 1840, stated that he had seen but one owl of any kind in that district, and from the distance at which it was, the species could not be ascertained. To the short-eared owl only would that locality seem to be suited, and to it, particularly well.

In the stomach of one specimen examined by me, were the legs of a dunlin (*Tringa variabilis*), and in another, the remains of mice.‡

* Davis. † Burkitt.

‡ The following quaint extract from Rutty's Natural History of the county of

As the dunlin is a shore bird, it may be remarked, that this owl is occasionally to be met with along the grassy margin of Belfast bay.

Capt. Portlock, in the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (vol. i. p. 52), mentions, on information communicated to him by Serjeant Neely, collector for the Ordnance Survey, that these birds are regular autumnal visitants to the rabbit-warren at Magilligan, county of Londonderry, and have been seen at the entrance of the burrows, within which they retired when disturbed; more than one was shot on emerging from the holes, and one was taken in a trap placed at the entrance of a burrow, when making its exit thence. As remarked by Captain Portlock, this habit brings to mind the burrowing owl of America, *Strix cunicularia*. By naming this species, the chord is touched which bears the imagination to far distant regions, and is therefore extremely pleasing; but there does not seem to me any analogy between the two cases. It is the general and natural habit of the American bird to live and breed within the burrows of the marmot, in the neighbourhood of the Rocky mountains; while we can only regard the *S. brachyotus* as a mere accidental tenant of the deserted dwelling of the rabbit in a particular locality.

A serjeant, who had been attached to the Ordnance Survey, informed me, that he saw a white owl also fly into a rabbit-hole at Magilligan, and by means of a trap, the bird was captured when coming out.

Dublin (1772), applies better to the short-eared, than to any other species of British owl:—"Owls are useful about stacks of corn, to destroy the mice, and the more necessary, as these are great breeders. They were of singular use to the inhabitants of Kent, and marshes of Essex, A.D. 1581, when they had a sore plague of strange mice suddenly covering the earth, and gnawing the grass-roots, which poisoned all herbage, and raised the plague of murrain among cattle grazing on it; no wit or art of man could destroy these mice, until another strange flight of owls came and killed them all."

A like observation is given us from Market-Downham, in the London Magazine, 1754, where we are told that the parishioners pay almost the same veneration to the Norway owls, [*Strix brachyotus*?] as the Egyptians did to the Ibis, and will not at any rate annoy them, on account of their coming to them and destroying the field-mice, with which they are infested commonly once about six or seven years, and which otherwise, like locusts, would devour their corn of every kind. Young owls are eaten in Norfolk, and it is a proverb among them, *as tender as a boiled owl*.

THE WHITE, OR BARN OWL.

Strix flammea, Linn.

Is the most common species, and takes up its abode in towns, as well as in country districts.

Where there is much old timber, the long-eared owl may be as frequent as this species; but throughout Ireland generally, the numbers of *S. flammea* doubtless greatly prevail. It is said to be the only species of owl known in the island of Rathlin, and to be very rare.* Both this and the long-eared owl, which were once plentiful in the plantations at Springvale, county of Down, are said to have almost entirely disappeared of late years, without any apparent cause, although the greatest protection was always afforded to them.

I have had the following evidence of the white owl's regular flight to some distance from its domicile, just as twilight commences. Near Belfast, there is a considerable extent of low-lying meadows which are flooded by heavy rains, and at such times are resorted to by various species of wild-fowl (*Anatidæ*). The flood never attaining such a height as to cover the banks surrounding these meadows, they are frequented by persons for the purpose of shooting the wild-fowl on their evening flight, and to whom the owl, on as "murderous deeds intent," occasionally falls a victim. It at first occurred to me that the owl's visit might be consequent on the flood having driven the rats, mice, &c., on which it preys, from the meadows to their banks, where, as the only place of refuge, these animals would be more than usually abundant; but I since ascertained that the owl equally haunts them when the flood is gone. I have seen it flying towards these grounds from the distance of nearly a mile.

This species builds its nest in the ordinary site, old houses, &c., about Youghal.† The family at Castle Warren, near Cork, were much alarmed on one occasion by hearing a loud snoring noise, like that made by a man after a day's hard labour, proceeding

* Dr. J. D. Marshall. † Ball.

from one of the chimneys, and all apprehension was not dispelled until owls of this species, which had a nest there, were discovered to be the snorers. The young have been seen in the evening flying to the battlements of the castle, where they kept up a snoring noise, until the old birds came and fed them.* In the county of Wexford, its nest has been found in a hollow tree.† The white owl is a well-known visitor to the dove-cot,—though not with the evil intent commonly imagined,—and in such a place, or rather a loft appropriated to pigeons in the town of Belfast, an observant friend informs me that a pair once had their nest, containing four young, which were brought up at the same time with many pigeons. The nests containing the latter were on every side, but the owls never attempted to molest either the parents or their young. As may be conjectured, this owl's nest was frequently inspected during the progress of the young birds. On the shelf beside them, never less than six, and as many as fifteen mice and young rats have been observed (no birds were ever seen), this too being the number left after their night's repast. The parent owls, when undisturbed, remained all day in the pigeon-loft. Mr. Waterton, in an admirable essay on this species, strongly urges the great good it does by the destruction of mice and allied vermin; as Sir William Jardine, in his full and excellent account of it, does also. ‡ In St. John's Wild Sports of the Highlands, the great service rendered to the farmer, &c., by owls, is likewise fully expatiated on, p. 66–67. The localities, indeed, in which we chiefly find this species in towns, bear circumstantial evidence of this fact. These are, to my own knowledge, grain stores, breweries, &c., wherever mice and rats particularly abound.

Of the stomachs of four white owls examined by me, one contained the remains of rats; another, of mice; a third was filled to distension with portions of eight mice; and the fourth exhibited only an imperfect coleopterous insect of the family *Harpalidæ*,

* Mr. Robert Warren, junr.

† Mr. J. Poole. See Jardine's Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 254.

‡ Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 256.

which could not when perfect have exceeded nine lines in length. A friend, too, on examining the pellets cast by these owls, has often, in addition to the fur and bones of rats and mice, perceived the wing-cases of beetles shining through them. The remains of birds he never detected. Mr. Ball has taken nine mice from the stomach of one of these owls. A thrush and sparrows, together with field-mice, have been found in one of their larders;* but it is probably in the absence of other prey that any of the feathered tribe are attacked. Once, however, I knew a tame one kill a full-grown lapwing (*Vanellus cristatus*), its only constant companion in a spacious garden.

A white owl, kept for upwards of a year in a friend's house, was from the first kindly disposed to the servant who fed it, but pugnacious towards its master, instantly striking with its talons at his finger when placed against the cage; but he rather taught it to do this, that its expertness might be witnessed. When spoken to by any one, it returned the recognition by most grotesquely moving from one leg to the other on its perch, accompanied at the same time by a bow or inclination of the head sideways. It screamed greatly during the night. Standing with one leg drawn up, and the entire foot concealed in the plumage, the white owl has a most singular appearance. Mr. Ball has known one that escaped from a place in which it was for a few days confined, return to it again after a short interval, a voluntary prisoner.

The ruins of Rome are, as may be supposed, a fine locality for the white owl. From the Coliseum, tomb of Cecilia Metella, &c., I have startled it from its mid-day repose.

THE TAWNY OWL.

Syrnium aluco, Linn. (sp.)
—— *stridula* „ (sp.)
Strix „ „

If included at all in the Irish Fauna, must be considered extremely rare.

* Poole.

It is enumerated in the lists of birds published in several of the Statistical Surveys of counties, and in other catalogues, but in such a manner as to be unworthy of record here. It never occurred to Mr. Templeton, nor have any of my ornithological friends or correspondents met with a specimen. The only notice which seems authentic, is that published in the 1st volume of the Annals of Natural History, p. 156, to the following effect :—That in Feb., 1838, Mr. Adams, gamekeeper at Shane's Castle park, assured me of a specimen having been killed there, within the preceding few years. From the circumstance of my informant having served in the capacity of gamekeeper in England, before coming to this country, he became acquainted with the species, which he correctly described to me under the name of "brown owl." The gentleman who, in the Zoologist for June 1848, (p. 2141,) and Saunders' News-letter of the 9th of that month, noticed the tawny owl as having been obtained in the Queen's county, mentions, in a letter to me, that he was mistaken respecting the species.

Mr. Macgillivray remarks, that "in the northern parts of Scotland this species is seldom, if ever, met with; but in the wooded portions of the middle and southern divisions, it is more frequently obtained than any other, excepting the long-eared and barn owls," vol. iii. p. 442.

THE SNOWY OWL.

Surnia nyctea, Linn. (sp.)
Strix „ „

Is a very rare winter visitant.

It is said to have been met with in 1812 and 1827.* Specimens killed in two winters only—1834–35, and 1837–38—have come under my own examination. To what I have already pub-

* To Mr. J. Poole, I am indebted for the following note :—Mr. B. Vicary, of Wexford, when residing at Kilmore, on the south coast, in 1812, near an extensive rabbit-burrow, was told on the first day of the shooting season that year, of a very large, white, extraordinary looking bird being perched on a fence at a short distance from the house. It remained on the spot until seen in staring majesty by that gen-

lished respecting Irish specimens, nothing is now to be added. —I can only bring together what has before appeared.

On June 9, 1835, I had the satisfaction of communicating the first notice of the occurrence of the snowy owl in Ireland to the Zoological Society of London, in whose Proceedings, (1835, p. 78,) it was subsequently published. About the 26th of March, 1835, a specimen of this bird was sent in a recent state to Dr. Adams of Portglenone, county of Antrim, by a person who had shot it a few days before in that neighbourhood, and who stated that a similar individual had been seen about the place where it was obtained. The specimen was presented by Dr. Adams to the Natural History Society of Belfast. It was immature, agreeing with the figure in Mr. Selby's Illustrations of British Ornithology.

On the 21st of the same month, as two of my friends were snipe-shooting at Bruslee, about twenty miles to the south-east of Portglenone, a large white owl, represented by them as twice the size of the common species of that colour (*Strix flammea*), rose from the heath within a few yards of one of them, just as he had discharged both barrels at a snipe. His companion fired at it from such a distance, that although struck, it escaped with the loss of only a few feathers, and afterwards alighted a short way off. On showing the specimen killed at Portglenone to one of these gentlemen, he recognised it as similar in size and colour to the bird which he had seen.

In Dublin, I subsequently saw a snowy owl, which had been shot in the county of Mayo, also in the month of March, and was credibly informed that a few others were obtained about the same

tleman, then rose at about forty yards distance, and flew towards him, when it was fired at, but sailed away apparently unhurt. It was, however, soon afterwards brought to him by a boy who had seen it fall; and excepting a flesh wound in the muscle of one wing, was quite uninjured. It was kept in confinement for a considerable time, and eventually killed by a servant for making too free with some chickens.

In the Fauna of Cork, published in 1845, it is stated that "an individual of this species was twice fired at by Richard D. Parker, Esq., of Sunday's Well, on Inchigeela mountain, in 1827, but was not procured." To make sure that there was not a typographical error in the year,—that 1827 was not substituted for 1837,—I wrote to the author, and learned that it was correctly printed. The bird was seen in the month of September.

time in different parts of Ireland. One may be mentioned as having been received from the county of Longford, on the 5th of April, by a bird-preserver in Dublin. When in that city, in the spring of 1838, I saw, in the possession of Edward Waller, Esq., a very fine specimen of the snowy owl, said to have been shot about three years before that time, near Omagh, in the county of Tyrone. There can be little doubt that this bird was of the same "flight" as the others. I was pleased to hear from Dr. P. Neill of Edinburgh, in August, 1835, that he had received a snowy owl alive, in the spring of that year, from Orkney, where it was captured at the end of March. Dr. Neill has contributed a very interesting account of this individual to Sir William Jardine's History of British Birds, vol. i. p. 307. It is there said to have been taken in the middle of April.

On the 2nd of December, 1837, a beautiful specimen of the snowy owl was shot in a quarry on Scrabo mountain, in the county of Down, and came into the possession of Thomas M'Leroth, Esq., of Killinether House, in that neighbourhood, who liberally presented it to the Belfast Museum. Having come under my inspection in a recent state, I drew up the following description of this bird, which differs in some particulars from other specimens described in detail.* On that account, and for the purpose of comparison with individuals noticed in the sequel, it is here given:—

	inch.	line.
Length, entire	24	0
Length of wing from carpus to end of longest quill	16	6
——— tarsus	2	3
——— bill measured along ridge	1	9
——— cere on its ridge	0	9
——— bill in a straight line from rictus to outer edge	1	9
——— middle toe	1	6
——— its claw, following curvature	1	8
——— its claw in a straight line	1	3½
——— inner claw, following curvature	1	9
——— outer claw, following curvature	1	6
——— hind claw, following curvature	1	5
Wings past the tail	1	6

* See Fauna Boreali-Americana, part ii, p. 190.

Extent of wings 4 feet 9½ inches; first quill 1½ inch shorter than the second, which is about 2 lines shorter than the third, this being the longest; the fourth is about 2 lines shorter than the second; the fifth 2 lines less than the first in length; this relative proportion of the quills is the same in the specimen from Portglenone, preserved in the Belfast Museum.

Colour of forehead, throat, and upper portion of breast, lower part of belly, under tail-coverts, under side of wings (except the roundish spots towards the points of primaries, secondaries, and tertials), and entire legs, white. Plumage of the body beneath the wings, lower part of breast, and upper portion of belly, white, beautifully barred with blackish-brown in waved and variously formed lines about half an inch apart, and becoming narrow as they approach the tail; the greatest breadth of these dark bars about 1½ line. Feathers of the occiput white, tipped with black; lower part of nape where the head joins the body, white; back, scapulars, and coverts of the wings, white, closely barred with blackish brown. Primaries, secondaries, and tertials (which, as to colouring, cannot well be separated in description, blending as they do into each other), at first darkly barred on both outer and inner webs towards the tips, but gradually becoming less so towards the centre (secondaries generally), where three or four round spots appear on the outer web only; thence the spots become more numerous, and towards the body (tertials) the bars again appear on both webs, thus, in the markings, balancing the primaries on the opposite side; upper tail coverts with narrow bars of blackish brown. Tail feathers twelve in number, the two outer ones pure white, third and fourth with two broad bars of dark blackish brown near the tip, fifth and sixth with three bars of the same colour. Irides, golden yellow. Weight 3¼ lbs. This bird was fat, and in high condition. On dissection, it proved a male; its stomach was quite empty.

In a letter, dated Twizell House, July 21, 1838, I was informed by P. J. Selby, Esq., that he had received a snowy owl from Killibegs, county of Donegal, near which place it was shot in the month of November or December, 1837. This is the same individual which appears from the "First Annual Report of the Natural History Society of Dublin," p. 6, to have been announced at one of the meetings as an eagle owl (*Bubo maximus*): it is almost unnecessary to add, that the gentleman who made the announcement had not the opportunity of seeing the specimen, but judged merely from the description communicated to him. The fact is mentioned here merely to guard against future error.

On young birds brought alive from North America.

In the month of October, 1837, Richard Langtry, Esq., of Fort William, near Belfast, received three living specimens of the snowy owl, which were taken in the previous month of August,

from a nest in the vicinity of the Moravian settlement, on the coast of Labrador. He had commissioned a person to procure for him there, living specimens of the gyr falcon, for which the owls were mistaken. In the preceding year, peregrine falcons were brought to him thence by mistake for gyr falcons. The white colour of the owls, however, led the person commissioned to procure the hawks, to believe that he had at last obtained the wished-for objects. These nestlings were at the time covered only with down, and were so young that it was at first feared they would not survive until the arrival of the vessel in London. Due care was, however, taken of them, upwards of 700 mice, procured by an Esquimaux for the occasion, were stowed in the vessel for their support; when these were consumed, reindeers' flesh was given them; and when the vessel came near soundings, they were supplied with sea-gulls caught upon baited hooks. An examination of these individuals has enabled me to correct an error which appears in some of the best ornithological works respecting the plumage of the snowy owl in the first year. This error seems, in part at least, to have originated with Bullock, who states (but not from personal observation), that the young birds which are seen in the Shetland Islands flying about with their parents, are brown at the end of summer. Temminck also remarks, that "les jeunes, au sortir du nid, sont couverts d'un duvet brun; les premières plumes sont aussi d'un brun clair."* Audubon observes, "I have shot specimens, which were, as I thought, so young as to be nearly of a uniform light-brown tint, and which puzzled me for several years, as I had at first conceived them to be of a different species."† On arrival, when they were in good condition, the birds under consideration were as follows :—

One, much smaller than the others, and presumed to be a male, was considerably whiter than the specimen shot in a wild state, whose plumage has just been described, but displayed two markings which the other does not possess; the back of the head, where it joins the body, being blackish-brown, and another patch of this colour appear-

* Man. Orn. tom. i. p. 82.

† Orn. Biog. vol. ii. p. 136; where a highly interesting account of the snowy owl's mode of fishing, as witnessed by the author at the Falls of the Ohio, will be found.

ing on the body just before the carpal joint of the wing. The supposed females which are much larger than the last mentioned, differ exceedingly from it in markings. They have the facial plumage, or that within the disk, the throat, body beneath the wings, under surface of the latter, the legs and toes, pure white. The head to the disk posteriorly, back, upper side of wings, and whole plumage between the folded wings, present as much of a blackish-brown colour as of white, the former being disposed in the same manner as described in the specimen from Scrabo; but the bars and other dark markings are so broad as to occupy equal space with the white or "ground" colour.

As immature, and more especially young birds of the year, often wander farther from their native domicile, than those which have attained maturity, it hitherto appeared singular to me, that none of the specimens of the snowy owl obtained in so southern a limit of their flight as England and Ireland, should be in the garb described as assumed previous to the first moult. The plumage of these Labrador birds, however, satisfied me, that the young of the snowy owl, like the immature individuals of many other species, do scatter themselves more widely than the adults.

The bird shot at Scrabo was, I have no doubt, a nestling in the summer of 1837. The individual figured by Mr. Selby* is also less white than Mr. Langtry's male bird, and if belonging to the same sex, I should consider it a bird of the first year. Of two other individuals, male and female, recorded by Mr. Selby to have been killed in Northumberland, in 1823, the latter was, from the number of black bars and spots, considered by that gentleman to be a young bird, but no opinion on the age of the male is offered; he is, however, stated to have been much whiter than the female, a circumstance which, as we have seen, does not militate against his also being a young bird of the year. Of the other specimens killed in England, I have not seen such detailed descriptions as enable me to judge of their age from comparison with the Labrador birds; nor, in consequence of its sex being unknown, can a satisfactory opinion be offered on the first snowy owl recorded to have been obtained in Ireland. (Zool. Proc. 1835, p. 78.) Were the sex of the individuals known, we should probably find that the

* Ill. Brit. Orn. pl. 23.

† See Naturalist's Library: Brit. Birds, Part I. p. 307.

greater number of these noble birds which have wandered to the British Islands, have been the young in the plumage of the first year.

It is thought desirable to add the following notice of the habits of these owls reared from the nest, as compared chiefly with those of Dr. Neill's bird,* procured when full grown. The male and one female specimen now in Mr. Langtry's possession, are wild, and sometimes fast for one or two days, though food is within their reach. They are chiefly fed on the heads of poultry, wild fowl, and rabbits; but mice and rats are preferred, as are also sea-gulls: from these birds no feathers have to be plucked, as the owls very efficiently render this service for themselves. The heads of plaice (*Platessa vulgaris*) several times offered them were refused, and being forced down their throats were instantly ejected. Castings of the indigestible portions of their food are regularly thrown up. Although the female is very partial to washing, the male has never been known to wash. Their usual cry is a long-drawn scream, but frequently they keep a low purring noise like a cat, and the male bird, when annoyed, utters a sound like coo-coo-coo; described by Dr. Neill as "cuckoo."

The third individual, a female, is very different from the others, in being somewhat playful and quite familiar even with strangers. It was interesting on one occasion, when standing about a pace distant from this bird during bright sunshine, to observe the contraction of the pupil of the eye, which was particularly conspicuous from contrast with the immense golden irides. When attracted by larks which were singing at a great elevation and distance, the pupil, from the ordinary size adapted to near objects, instantly diminished to its minimum, or half the ordinary diameter; and again, when the sight was directed to birds at less distance, varied accordingly. The other two owls are not in the least affected by bright sunshine; and from their observing birds passing at a great height in the air, or, as expressed to me, "almost in the clouds," they are considered to see as far as a golden eagle, their companion in captivity. Live rats turned out to this female owl

* See Naturalist's Library: Brit. Birds, Part I. p. 307.

have been invariably captured within a very short time. In the few instances in which I have seen dead prey seized, the four claws were used.*

The preceding account of Mr. Langtry's birds was published in the Annals of Natural History for June, 1838. Two of them were soon after that period sent to the Zoological Garden, in the Phœnix Park, Dublin. Respecting the one which survived the longest, I made the following notes on the 6th of Sept., 1845:—"This bird, now more than eight years old, appears in the highest state of health, and from the exceeding richness of its soft downy plumage, is extremely beautiful. It is much whiter than any of the individuals represented in the works at hand for reference, namely, those of Bewick, Wilson,† Selby, Bennett,‡ Yarrell, and Jardine.|| At a front view,—the bird looking towards me,—it is purely white without a single spot; viewed dorsally, the upper half of its plumage is also white, but on the coverts about the middle of the wing, two or three blackish-brown spots appear. The only other markings of this colour are a very few spots disposed at random on the lowest portion of the wing-coverts, and a few bands towards the tips of two of the secondaries. The bird is wholly white excepting the wings, to which the dark markings are confined, and these are different on each wing." This bird died in the middle of October, 1846, and a *post-mortem* examination of its body took place. Outwardly all looked fair, but within "not a muscle, vessel, or portion of viscera but was diseased." (Ball.)

Migration of the Snowy Owl.

The following notes were published in the Annals of Natural History for April, 1839:—

I have the pleasure on this occasion of recording a novel and interesting fact in the history of that beautiful bird, the snowy owl. By the ship *John and Robert,* (Captain M'Kechnie), of 501 tons burthen, belonging to the port of Belfast, that arrived here from Quebec early in the month of December, 1838, three speci-

* See observation to the contrary in the last-cited work, p. 310.

† Amer. Ornith. ‡ Gard. and Menag. Zool. Soc. || Hist. Brit. Birds.

mens of this bird, which had been caught on board, were brought hither alive. A fourth individual, similarly obtained, died about the time the vessel entered Belfast bay.

These birds were secured either at twilight or by night, when perched on the rigging, the sailors observing that they were asleep before attempting their capture. They were kept on flesh-meat, which, for the first ten days, was forced down their throats, but after this time they fed of themselves; in about fifteen days after their capture, the vessel came into port. These three birds, of which two are males and the other a female, are very fine examples of the snowy owl; I have not seen a more splendid specimen than the last-mentioned, which died and is now in my possession. I should consider all of them birds of the year, and from the one that died having been described to me as similar to mine, it probably was so likewise.*

Having heard that these were part of a large "flight" of snowy owls which for several days were seen about the vessel, I (never having read of this species being met with on its migration) made the fullest inquiry into the subject. The captain obligingly replied to all my queries, and besides furnished me with the log-book of the ship.

It may in the first place be desirable to give an extract from the "log" for a week previous to the owls' occurrence, that we may learn if the state of the wind, &c., will account for the great number of these birds observed in the course of their migration. The vessel, which was bound from Quebec to Belfast, was driven by contrary winds along the coast of Labrador.

Notices of the owls were kept separate, but are here added to the log, which otherwise is much condensed.

1838.

Nov. 8. Wind W.N.W. at noon; strong gales and tremendous sea running. N.W. at midnight, and more moderate.

* See remarks on Mr. Langtry's birds. His snowy owls, which are kept in a spacious garden containing many fruit trees, never perch upon them, but remain constantly on the ground, although in rainy weather a portion of their snow-white plumage is much soiled in consequence, greatly to the disadvantage of their appearance.

Nov. 9. Wind W. by N. at 10 A.M.; weather hazy. At 5 P.M. strong gale from E.; bore up for the harbour of Labrador; here we lay for the next 48 hours. On the 10th were strong gales from the E. On the 11th strong gales from the S.

— 12. Wind N. by E., moderate; left harbour of Labrador this day; light breezes and clear weather.

— 13. Wind N.; going along shore passed Bellisle.

— 14. Wind E. by N. at noon; light airs; cloudy weather; sun obscure.

— 15. Wind S. by E. at noon; sun obscure; strong gales from the S.

— 16. Wind S.S.W., light airs, clear weather; saw owls to the number of about thirty or forty for the first time. Lat. 54.02; long. 47.40; about 250 miles from the straits of Bellisle.

— 17. Wind S.S.W., fresh breezes; a few owls alighted on masts; two captured this evening about 7 o'clock. Lat. 54.20; long. 46.20; about 375 miles from Bellisle.

— 18. Wind S.W.; strong breezes and heavy sea from the E.; great numbers of owls, about fifty or sixty flying about and alighting on the rigging; captured none to-day, nor did any remain on the ship this night. Lat. 54.50; 450 miles from Bellisle.

— 19. Wind N.W., strong breezes and cloudy weather; squally with snow showers during the day; captured two more owls to-night. Lat. 54.51; long. 37.39; about 635 miles from Bellisle.

— 20. Wind N. by E., heavy gales with a tremendous sea running; saw several owls, but none were caught. Lat. 54.50; long. 33.10.

— 21. Wind N.E. at 2 P.M.; E. by S. at 4 P.M.; light breezes and cloudy weather; saw a gannet and curlew. Lat. 54.25; long. 31.40; about 740 miles from Bellisle.

— 22. Wind S.E. by S., light breezes; no owls seen these two days past, nor were any afterwards met with.

Dec. 4. Vessel arrived at Belfast.

The captain describes the migration of these owls to have been an extremely beautiful sight, and from his never having seen such birds before, he was greatly interested about them. Sometimes they kept flying near the vessel without alighting, and again there would be one or two on every yard arm, with others hovering just above: on alighting, they fell asleep, apparently from exhaustion. Numerous as were these beautiful creatures, it was only when occasional bickerings took place among those which had alighted on the yard-arms, and in the stillness of night, that they were heard during their entire presence. Their flight, described as inaudible, could not but call to mind the finest and most poetical description of this characteristic trait applied to the owls generally:

"How serenely beautiful their noiseless flight! A flake of snow is not winnowed through the air more softly silent!"* Occasionally, when but little way was made, they remained for a day about the ship, and again, as reported to me, "went off for a day and returned next morning," greatly to the surprise of the beholders how they could find the ship after a night had intervened. What must have added much additional interest to their appearance, was the idea entertained, that these birds blown from the coast of Labrador, and finding, like the dove of old, "no rest for the sole of her foot," had, after traversing the pathless waters, sought the vessel for this purpose, loitering about her course, disappearing for a day, and again hastening to repose upon her yards and rigging. But however pleasing such imaginings, it is not for the naturalist here to pause, but in search of TRUTH, assuredly not less attractive, to pursue inquiry further.

If by reason of storms, or otherwise, he cannot perceive why the same birds should, after having rested on and left the vessel, re-appear another day, he may perhaps conclude, that the owls thus seen, were flocks successively migrating to more southern latitudes, and that different birds appeared on each occasion, or, at all events, that it was not the same individuals which presented themselves during the whole period.

That the regions within the arctic circle are the chief abode of the snowy owl is well known, as it likewise is, that numbers migrate thence in winter to Canada and the United States. Reference to the "log" will show, that during the five days on which these birds were successively observed, the vessel kept nearly to the 54th degree of latitude, having sailed during the time about 500 miles in an easterly direction; consequently, if the flight of the owls were to Canada or the States, the vessel, which in such event might possibly "have fallen in with" them a second time, was proceeding somewhat in an opposite course, but whither it does not appear from the direction of the wind that they would have been driven by storms. A greater number of birds, too,

* Professor Wilson in Blackwood's Magazine, vol. xx. (1826) p. 671.

being seen on the 18th than on the 16th, favours the idea of a continuous migration.

The vessel was about 250 miles from the straits of Bellisle, the S.E. point of Labrador, when these owls first appeared, but sailing eastward, was on the day they were last seen about 740 miles distant thence, and 480 miles from the southern extremity of Greenland, which for some time was the nearest land.

In November, 1840, further information on this subject was obtained from a trust-worthy and intelligent mate of another vessel belonging to the port of Belfast. He stated that in two different years, when his vessel was from 200 to 300 miles off the banks of Newfoundland, snowy owls alighted on the spars and rigging. This occurred only during fogs, but so long as these continued, which was occasionally for two or three days, the birds remained: whenever the atmosphere became clear, they took their departure; they never permitted themselves to be caught. In both years these owls were met with in September, and once, as particularly noted, on the 20th of that month.*

In concluding the *Raptores*, it may be mentioned, that I have heard of the occurrence of a few species in Ireland, which have not a place in this work, in consequence of their being insufficiently authenticated. The relative differences between the species of this order, obtained in Great Britain and Ireland, are:—

IN GREAT BRITAIN, AND NOT IN IRELAND.

Fam. Falconidæ.

Circus cineraceus, . . Ash-coloured Harrier.

* Mr. Thomas M'Cullough of Picton, when on his passage thence to Hull, in November, 1834, and upwards of 200 miles from the nearest point of Newfoundland, states, that a snowy owl passed close by the vessel repeatedly, without exhibiting any disposition to alight. "It shewed no symptom of fatigue, but skimmed as dexterously along the deep trough of the rolling waves, or rose as freely over their huge white crests as if it had been merely coursing the surface of its native hills."† Though evidently in search of food on the surface of the water, it was not observed to seize any object. An interesting account is given by the same gentleman of a snowy owl kept on board the vessel during the passage.

† Audubon, Orn. Biog. vol. v. p. 382.

Elanus furcatus, . . Swallow-tailed Kite.

Fam. Vulturidæ.

Neophron percnopterus, Egyptian Vulture.

Fam. Strigidæ.

Surnia funerea, . . . Hawk Owl.
Noctua passerina, . . Little Owl.
— Tengmalmi, . Tengmalm's Owl.

IN IRELAND, AND NOT IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Vultur fulvus, . . . Griffon Vulture.
Aquila nævia, . . . Spotted Eagle.

The *Circus cineraceus* has been met with from the south to the north of England, but has not occurred in Scotland, unless in the instance mentioned at p. 83. *Elanus furcatus* is an American (N. and S.) species, which has been taken once in Scotland and once in England. The *Neophron percnopterus,* which inhabits the south of Europe, has but once been procured in Great Britain. *Surnia funerea* is included in the British list, from a single individual captured on board a vessel off the coast of Cornwall, as recorded by me in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society for 1835, p. 77. It inhabits the northern parts of Europe and North America. *Noctua passerina* and *N. Tengmalmi* are only occasional, and very rare visitants to England; in Scotland, they have not been noticed. The former is chiefly a native of the more southern portion of Europe, not having been seen beyond 55° north latitude, according to Temminck. The latter inhabits more especially the northern parts of that continent, but has been obtained on the southern side of the Alps. It is common in North America.

The distribution of *Vultur fulvus,* and *Aquila nævia,* is treated of under those species, in the preceding pages.

The difference between the species of raptorial birds enumerated in the respective lists of Great Britain and Ireland, arises, with the exception of *Circus cineraceus* (a species resorting to England regularly in the summer), from mere accidental visitants. If we pause for a moment to consider the probability of the occurrence

of these species in the one island rather than in the other, in connection with the countries which they severally frequent, we shall find, 1st.—That the exclusively American species *Elanus furcatus*, might be equally expected to visit either island; 2nd.—That *Surnia funerea*, being an inhabitant of the northern parts of Europe, should rather be expected to occur in Great Britain (either in Scotland or England) than in Ireland; 3rd.—That all the others, *Neophron percnopterus*, *Vultur fulvus*, *Aquila nævia*, *Noctua passerina*, and *Noctua Tengmalmi*, from their inhabiting (periodically or permanently) the more southern portion of Europe, should rather, on account of its comparative proximity thereto, be expected to visit England, than either Scotland or Ireland. Such has partially, but only partially, been the result. Accidental visitants cannot in such a point of view be placed under any positive law.

BIRDS OF IRELAND.

Order, INSESSORES.

PERCHING BIRDS.

Order, INSESSORES.

(*Perching Birds.*)

THE GREAT GREY SHRIKE.

Ash-coloured Butcher-bird.

Lanius excubitor, Linn.

Has occasionally been obtained in the autumn and winter.

Two of these birds came under the notice of Templeton; one shot in the county of Down, and sent to him by Rainey Maxwell Esq., and the other, observed by himself in the county of Antrim, about the beginning of the present century. Four, obtained in these counties, have come under my own observation. The first, a bird in mature plumage, was shot at Echlinville, late in the autumn, more than twenty years ago;—the second, an adult male, was killed at Beechmount, near Belfast, in November, 1824; another individual was in company with it, and remained about the place for a few weeks afterwards;—in a neighbouring locality, one, (perhaps the latter bird,) was shot during the few days of frost which occurred at the end of January, 1835. A recent adult male was shot on a thorn-hedge at Kilmore, county of Down, on the 15th of January, 1845: in its crop was the greater portion of a grey linnet, which was recognised by a few feathers that remained. On the 16th of November, 1846, a recent bird of this species, killed a few days before, came under my examination in Belfast. The contents of the stomach consisted entirely

of insect food; the remains of earwigs, *Carabi*, and *Staphylini*. It was ascertained that this bird had first been taken by a bird-catcher, between Kilrea and Garvagh (county of Londonderry) in a trap-cage set for goldfinches. Being kept for some days in a cage with a canary-finch, it did not molest this bird, though refusing all food that was offered. It escaped from the cage, and was afterwards shot in the garden of Dr. Lane, at Newtown-limavady. The plumage being smeared with bird-lime sufficed for its identification.

Further, noting the localities from north to south, one of these birds was killed at Mullaghmore, county of Sligo, about the year 1831 or 1832;* another preserved at Knockdrin Castle, West-meath, the seat of Sir Richard Levinge, bart., was obtained there previous to 1834. In the year 1822 or 1823, one was procured on Shankhill mountain, county of Dublin, and in the Phœnix Park, adjacent to the city, another was shot in 1831 (?). In the Queen's-county, one was killed on the 18th of December, 1847.† The species is said to have been met with in the counties of Tipperary and Waterford; a specimen was procured near Cork in 1824;‡ a second, as noticed in the Fauna of Cork (Introduction, p. iv.), was shot near Carrigalane, about ten miles to the south of the city, at the end of October, 1844, and a third was obtained in the same quarter, early in August, 1845.

The ash-coloured shrike is only an occasional visitant to England and Scotland, having been met with in those countries at uncertain periods, as above noticed with respect to Ireland. It has never been known to breed in Great Britain, but is stated to do so, and remain during the year in France.

The red-backed shrike (*Lanius collurio*), a regular summer visitant to England; and the Woodchat (*L. rufus*), a very rare one, to that country, cannot at present be included in the Irish catalogue; nor is either species enumerated in that of Scotland by Sir W. Jardine

* Mr. H. H. Dombrain. † Mr. Robt. J. Montgomery.

‡ The same noticed in Cork Fauna, p. 5, although the year appears different there.

or Mr. Macgillivray. The following shrikes came under my observation when proceeding from Malta to the Morea in 1841:—April 23rd, when eighty miles from Malta, and Cape Passaro fifty miles distant, a lesser gray shrike (*L. minor*) flew on board; I had a near view of it several times:—25th, when 135 miles east of Mount Etna, and about sixty from Calabria, a shrike (the species of which I could not distinguish, owing to the height at which it kept on the rigging,) seized a yellow wren (*Sylvia trochilus*) which it eat except the bill:—26th, distant from Zante (the nearest land) eighty-six miles, 130 from Navarino, a fine male woodchat (*L. rufus*) was caught on board. The *L. minor* has not yet been noticed in England, but has been met with as far north on the continent as Holland.

THE SPOTTED FLYCATCHER.

Muscicapa grisola, Linn.

Is a regular summer visitant to some parts of Ireland:

And perhaps to suitable localities throughout the island;—which seem to be especially gardens and pleasure-grounds. The species is little known, except to the observant ornithologist. Owing to the dullness of its plumage, its want of song, and its weak call being seldom heard, the spotted flycatcher is certainly one of the least obtrusive of our birds; the trees, too, having put forth their "leafy honours" before the period of its arrival, further serve to screen it from observation. To Templeton it was known as a regular summer visitant to the neighbourhood of Belfast; a pair is mentioned as having built in the lime-trees at his residence, Cranmore, in July, 1801 and 1802. It is the latest of the summer birds in making its appearance about Belfast; the 7th or 8th of May (1838) being the earliest date of its arrival noted by me. On either of those days one was seen at the Falls; but on the 12th of the same month in that year, not one was met with in Shane's Castle Park, a circumstance implying that the arrival had not been general; on the 15th of May, 1832, the species was observed at Wolf-hill. White remarked its

arrival at Selborne more than once to be so late as the 20th of May. It remains in the north of Ireland until autumn is very far advanced.

In addition to the ordinary places selected for nidification here, as trees, holes in walls, &c., I have seen a nest at the Falls, resting in part upon an aperture in a wall, and partly on the branch of a fig-tree trained against it. Garden walls, indeed, seem to be favourite sites for the nest. This is generally of careless construction, and formed of various materials, occasionally of moss, to which is sometimes added hair, cobwebs, and feathers; the last not being always used, even as lining. An observant friend states that a nest placed against the unglazed window of an outhouse at Beechmount, was so composed of cobwebs inside and outside, that no other material was visible. From its choice of this fragile building substance, the spotted flycatcher is called *cobweb bird* in some parts of England. On the nest alluded to being approached when it contained young, the parent bird was very bold, flying angrily at the intruder, uttering shrill cries, and approaching him so near that it might almost have been struck with his hand.*

A pair of these birds is said to have built their nest on the angle of a lamp-post in one of the streets of Leeds, and brought up their young there; † in the ornamental crown surmounting a lamp near Portland Place, London, a nest was also constructed, in which five eggs were laid and incubated.‡ That a pair might have had similar intentions in Belfast, was supposed on the 8th of June, 1842, when one was seen from our parlour in Donegal Square to alight on a lamp-post a few yards distant from the window, where it was soon joined by another, and both continued there for some time, making occasional sorties after flies, but still returning to the lamp-post. This site was not, however,

* In Macgillivray's Brit. Birds. vol. iii. p. 522, most interesting memoranda on the number of times during one whole day that a pair of these birds fed their young are given from the observation of Mr. Durham Weir; who adds, that "they beat off most vigorously all kinds of small birds that approach their nest."

† Atkinson's Compendium.

‡ Jesse's Gleanings, second series, and Yarrell's Brit. Birds.

chosen, but in a more natural one, among ivy on an adjacent wall in the square, it was afterwards ascertained that they had a nest. In a town-garden here, a pair of these birds built for a long period annually; too many of the choicest sites always "offering," where bad bricks had crumbled away and left "ample space and verge enough" for the summer mansion of the fly-catcher. The nest was at least partially screened from observation by the foliage of the fruit trees upon the wall; the eggs were generally four in number.

The Rev. Geo. Robinson of Tanderagee informs me (1847) that the spotted flycatcher is as numerous in the demesne at Drumbanagher, as he has ever seen it in the parks or pleasure-grounds of England. He has observed it, but not commonly, at other places in the county of Armagh, and also in Tyrone. From the vicinity of Londonderry, specimens were obtained for the Ordnance Survey collection. This species regularly visits the neighbourhood of Dublin. The Rev. Thomas Knox remarks, that it breeds about Killaloe, county of Clare, and has occasionally either two broods, or builds a second time if the first nest be destroyed, as on the 1st of August, 1833, he saw one sitting on young birds, though on the 8th of June in the previous year, he knew a brood to have been hatched.* It is not uncommon, and breeds about Clonmel.† In the Fauna of Cork it is said to be a regular summer visitant to that county.

The Pied Flycatcher (*Muscicapa atricapilla* or *M. luctuosa*), a summer visitant to some parts of England, has not been met with in Ireland or Scotland. When on the 26th of April, 1841, in H.M.S. Beacon nearly ninety miles from Zante, the nearest land, and 130 from Navarino, a male white-collared flycatcher (*Muscicapa albicollis*) was caught on board, and on the following day, when about half that distance from these places respectively, two or three more male birds flew on board, as did also the same number of females, either of *M. albicollis* or *M. atricapilla*, but more probably of the former species.

* On this subject see note to White's Selborne, p. 179, ed. 1837, and Journal of a Naturalist, p. 207.

† Mr. Davis.

THE WATER OUZEL.

Water blackbird. Dipper.

Cinclus aquaticus, Bechst.

Sturnus cinclus, Linn.

Inhabits suitable localities throughout the island.

Where such prevail, it is as common in Ireland as in Scotland, Wales, and England.* This species might well be designated the bird of the water-fall, so constantly is it to be seen in connection with this fine feature of natural scenery. Once only did this bird come under my notice, on the Rhine from Cologne to Schaffhausen, and then it was at the great fall near the latter city. It is always attendant on the torrents rushing through the sublime alpine defiles of Switzerland, and though Acerbi tells us that the species is not found in Italy, I at one view observed three or four individuals at the surpassingly beautiful cascade of Velino, the admirable description of which occupies four stanzas of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. But,—to return homewards,—it may be seen about the humble water-falls in the glens and ravines of the Belfast mountains every day throughout the year. Such, however, are not its only haunts, for with the romantic and picturesque in scenery, we may, as a general rule, associate this species. When the stream descends to the lowlands, and

"Drags its slow length along,"

with a placid surface, unbroken by rock or stone, the water ouzel ceases to accompany it, and returns towards its upland source.

It is remarked by Mr. Selby, that these birds are seen "always on the margin of the stream, or perched in their particular attitude on some projecting stone in the middle of the water." Thus are they characteristically represented in his splendid Illustrations of British Ornithology, as well as by Bewick, whose vignette more especially exhibits the species in its "rightful place" in connection with the scenery depicted. About the ponds at Wolf-hill, an elevated situation near Belfast, where these birds

* Mr. Selby having remarked that the water ouzel is "probably" met with in Derbyshire, it may be stated, that I never saw the species more plentiful any where than in that county, especially about the romantic Dove, and the river at Matlock.

have chiefly come under my observation, the willows that fringe the bank, are, however,—owing to the absence of stones,—their constant perch. Contiguous to these ponds are rocky mountain streams, by which they are supplied.

The water ouzel is described by Montagu and Selby, merely as a very early songster. In the north of Ireland, its song is occasionally heard at all seasons; and more especially when other birds are silent, as in the autumnal, and still more frequently, in the winter months. The bright mornings and forenoons that occur during the most severe frost and snow, have always seemed to me its favourite time for song, which it pours forth when quickly flying at a great height, as well as when perched just above the water.

The first nest of this bird that came under my observation, was placed in a hole in the clayey bank of a pond, where, owing to the shelter afforded, there was no occasion for the display of the ordinary domed architecture, and it was consequently dispensed with. This nest contained four eggs, from which three young were produced. So soon as these were fledged, they were to be seen accompanied by their parents, early every morning about the same pond, some singing, others diving into the water from the rail on which they were perched, none of them being for one moment at rest. When neither diving nor singing, they went through the most grotesque and amusing evolutions; and were a highly interesting group, presenting quite a picture of social happiness. I have frequently witnessed similar playfulness of manner; though from the fact of these birds being generally seen singly, the species is regarded as unsocial. In autumn, at a favourite haunt, I was once much amused by observing a water ouzel singing and perking about its head most ludicrously as it sat on the top of a huge stone, around the base of which a second individual at the same time was skipping in a comical manner.

The following note by an accurate observer, also illustrates the same trait: "On the 26th of Sept.,* a pair of water ouzels, at

* The date is mentioned, to show that they are not any of the captivating arts preceding the nuptial season.

the upper pond, Wolf-hill, plunged several times into the water, which was some feet deep, and remained, moving about in it with only their heads above the surface; twice one of them disappeared altogether, but each time for only two seconds; they then pursued each other round the pond, alighted each on a separate stone, when one of them sang: and several times they repeated all these manœuvres." Early in the morning of the 9th of October, 1843, when driving down the wildly picturesque Glenapp, in Ayrshire, a couple of water ouzels appeared flying in company over the river, into which one of them suddenly dropped and disappeared. This was apparently done through mere playfulness, the water being very muddy from a long and heavy shower which had just fallen, and the food of the bird, it was conjectured, could hardly be seen, except upon the surface. It proceeded for several yards concealed by the water, excepting now and then, when it came so near the surface as to be visible: the river was shallow at the place, and rushing over a very rough stony bed. On emerging, it flew down the river after its companion. I have often, when a boy, seen the water ouzel dive into a pond of clear spring-water at Wolf-hill ten feet in depth; but did not give attention to its motions beneath the surface; it dived from a pipe placed about a foot above the water. Only by a quick plunge, or quiet dive from a little height have I seen this bird enter deep water; but into shallow water, I have observed it walk gradually just so far as to enable a thorough ablution to be performed, after which it returned to the land like any other species.*

But to return to the nests. Of five other sites observed to be

* The water ouzel is descanted on in an interesting manner in St. John's Wild sports, &c., of the Highlands, chapter 25, p. 198, and the author remarks: — "Despite of Mr. Waterton's strong opinion of the impossibility of the feat, he (the bird in question) walks and runs about on the gravel at the bottom of the water, scratching with his feet among the small stones, and picking away at all the small insects and animalcula which he can dislodge. On two or three occasions I have witnessed this act of the water ouzel, and have most distinctly seen the bird walking and feeding in this manner, under the pellucid waters of a Highland burn." Mr. Dillwyn, too, observes: "I have often seen this bird run rather than dive from the edge of a stream; and while under water by some motion of the wings as well as legs, dabble along at the bottom for a minute or more."—*Fauna and Flora of Swansea*, p. 4.

selected for nidification, in the neighbourhood of Belfast, three were in the fissures of rocks close to the finest cascades of our mountain streams. One (in 1832) was at the side of the Cave-hill waterfall, the highest in the extensive parish in which the town just named is situated; the brood duly appeared; and five or six birds, old and young, were often, through the autumn, seen in company about the place. Another was tastefully built on a niche near the summit of a waterfall of 30 feet in the Crow glen, the rock directly above rising to such an elevation as to render it inaccessible. Here the nest was very large, formed of moss, and of the regular domed structure, upon which the spray from the cascade seldom ceased to beat, the water flowing over the rock being only about two feet distant. This circumstance, however, apparently caused the desertion of the nest, as it was abandoned before the production of a brood; it was not completed until the 20th of April, upon which day one of the birds was for some time observed pulling the growing moss off the moist rocks to add to the structure, while the other remained idle at the base of the cascade. During a flood, the water would have fallen in a sheet over the nest, and left it uninjured. On the 27th of April, in a subsequent year, a nest containing young was observed at the side of a rock bordering a mountain stream, above the surface of which it was elevated only a foot; the lining consisted of the dried stalks of grasses, and a few leaves of trees. In the hole of a wall beside an artificial fall of the river Lagan, another was placed. Throughout the breeding season of 1832, a pair of these birds frequented a dark shed erected over a large mill-wheel of nearly forty feet diameter, at Wolf-hill, where it was presumed they had a nest. Their appearance, perching on the arms of the wheel, and again emerging from this gloomy abode, often caused surprise, more especially when they sallied forth from between the arms of the gigantic wheel in motion, a state in which it was almost constantly.

The last nest of this species which came under my notice, was observed, at the end of May, 1842, near a cascade of Carnlough river (county of Antrim), above the great fall. It was very large,

fully the size of a man's head, composed externally of moss, and placed on the shelf of a rock rising from the river, which flowed about seven feet beneath. The aperture was close to the base, the thickness of the nest merely being between it and the rock; it was *eaved* so, that from particular points of view only could any entrance be observed. This bird breeds in the glens around Clonmel;* and apertures in the arches of the bridge, over the Shannon at Killaloe, are occupied by its nests.† Thus, where there is a deficiency of natural breeding-places, the water ouzel can accommodate itself to artificial structures.

As several authors, to whose works I have referred, differ in their descriptions of the colour of the legs of this species, it may be remarked, that two mature specimens killed on the 25th July, had the entire front (and it only) of the tarsi and upper side of the toes of a whitish colour, like the clouded or opaque part of a quill; all the rest was blackish.

The stomachs of two individuals I examined, in the month of December, contained the remains of the larvæ of aquatic *Coleoptera*, and one in January exhibited the fragments of insects only. The stomach of one looked to in October was entirely filled with the remains of crustacea, excepting two full-sized dorsal spines of a three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus*). A person who has had ample opportunities of observing the species, states, that from shallow water he has often seen it bring the larvæ of *Phryganeæ*, and break their cases on a stone to get at the contained animal. Sir Wm. Jardine, in the second volume of his British Birds, gives a full and admirable account of this species, as Mr. Macgillivray likewise does in his second volume; the latter description, however, being marred by unnecessary reflections on other ornithologists. Both these authors state, that they never found the ova of fish in water ouzels dissected by them, nor do they think that these birds ever seek or use such food, although, from an ignorant belief that they destroy the ova of the salmon, they are unrelentingly persecuted in some parts of the north of Scotland.

* Mr. R. Davis. † Rev. T. Knox.

A reward of sixpence for every head would seem to have effected a complete "clearance" of water ouzels in some districts there; as Sir Wm. Jardine says he was unable to meet with a single individual in the most suitable localities. This author further mentions (p. 71) that, in one Highland district, he had the factor's authenticated report of 548 of these birds having been destroyed within three years. When spending the month of September, 1842, at Aberarder, in the north of Inverness-shire, I was gratified to find (although the erroneous notion just mentioned respecting it is current there), that the water ouzel "maintained its ground" about the streams where nature intended that it should be. It is known there by the name of king-fisher, as it is generally in the north of Scotland. Mr. Poole mentions that about Wexford also, the name of king-fisher is applied to this bird. He gives the following instance of its double signification:—Being one day on the look out for water ouzels, in a favourite haunt about a mill, and having fired at one, the report brought the miller to the spot. My correspondent anticipating much information from one who thus lived in their regular haunts, commenced questioning the miller as to the habits of the species; but the amount of his knowledge consisted in the remark that the hen birds are common enough, but the cock, which is a most brilliant creature, had never come under his notice but once. Water ouzels of both sexes were, therefore, considered by the miller as hens, and the true king-fisher (*Alcedo ispida*) as the male bird. In no part of Ireland am I aware of the species under consideration suffering, as it does in Scotland, from ignorant persecution.

THE MISSEL THRUSH.*

Turdus viscivorus, Linn.

Is a resident species pretty generally distributed over wooded districts.

* This bird passes under the name of Jay in many parts of Ireland; about Belfast I have heard it called *corny keevor*. *Butcher-bird* is the term applied to it in a part of Donegal.

The remarkable feature in the history of this bird, is its absence from the country until of late years, and its rapid increase from the period of its first appearance,—an observation which applies to Great Britain as well as to Ireland. The first individual that I have heard of, occurring in the north of Ireland, was shot by John Sinclaire, Esq., about the year 1800, from a flock of field-fares, at Redhall, in the county of Antrim. Within a very few years afterwards, the species bred at Belvoir Park, county of Down; and in 1807 my friend just named observed a nest at Oriel Temple, county of Louth. In Tollymore Park, situated at the base of the mountains of Mourne (Down), it is said to have been first known about 1830. Mr. J. V. Stewart remarked, in 1832, with respect to the north-west of Donegal, that it had been quite unknown there until within the few preceding years, but was then common and resident—flocks of from fifteen to twenty being seen at the approach of autumn. About that time a specimen was sent to me from the county of Fermanagh. In 1839, the species was said to have been increasing much of late years in the neighbourhood of Portumna, county of Galway. Around Clonmel (Tipperary) it was then common. In 1845, missel thrushes were plentiful in the wooded districts of the county of Wexford, where they had been known only for about ten years; * and at the same period were numerous in the county of Waterford, where some years before they had been rare. They have for some time been common in the county of Cork:—one shot there by Mr. R. Ball, in 1818, was considered an extraordinary rarity. In Kerry, they were first seen in 1827 by the late Mr. T. F. Neligan, who observed a gradual increase annually to their numbers until 1837, when the communication was made to me.

In the counties of Antrim and Down, the missel thrush was at first confined to the warm and richly wooded districts, but gradually spread from them over the plantations generally; and of late years it has inhabited those which stretch farthest towards the mountain tops.

This bird builds very early;—before the trees put forth their

* Poole.

leaves. On the 6th of April, 1833, a nest with four eggs was observed in an elder in the glen at Wolf-hill; where, however, two other nests, built on larch firs, were remarked, on the 26th of May in the same year, with the birds at that late period incubating; probably in consequence of the first eggs or brood having been destroyed. It is also noted as building on April the 5th, 1837. On the 7th of April, 1844, a nest, in a young ash tree in Colin Glen, examined by a juvenile friend, contained three eggs; on our proceeding thence from Belfast, pairs of missel thrushes were seen in two or three other localities attacking magpies, and driving them from the vicinity of their nests. Although the spring of 1845 was remarkably late, a pair of these thrushes was observed by an ornithological friend building on the 3rd of April, and, as usual, in an exposed place—the cleft of a birch tree, within a few feet of an avenue at Cromac, being the site;—on the 16th, incubation was going forward. The preceding are casual observations made in the neighbourhood of Belfast.

In the county of Wexford, they have been known to pair as early as the 29th of December; to have the nest completed on the 4th of March, and the eggs laid on the 22nd of that month.* The missel thrush sometimes builds in towns. When in Dublin in the year 1838, I was assured that pairs had bred for the few preceding years in the garden of Trinity College, and in the grounds attached to the house of the Royal Society:—in the trees at Donegal Square, Belfast, too, it probably builds, as towards the end of March, and early in April, its song is poured forth in the early morning from the tops of the loftiest trees. The nest is generally most conspicuous: almost every one that I have seen was placed in the forking of the main stem, or chief branches of trees, whether these were wholly bare, or clothed with cryptogamic vegetation; but they are sometimes situated eight or ten feet from the main stem, particularly on the branches of firs. Trees in young plantations, rising from twenty to thirty feet in height, are often selected. May it not be in some degree to counter-

* Poole.

balance the danger to which its nest is subjected from the exposed site, (selected according to the dictates of nature,) that this bird is endowed with the extraordinary courage and perseverance manifested in its defence. Often have I seen a pair of these birds driving off magpies, and occasionally fighting against four of them. The pair to which the first mentioned nest belonged, attacked a kestrel, which appeared in their neighbourhood when the young birds were out, although probably without any felonious intent upon them. One of these thrushes struck the hawk several times, and made as many more attempts to do so but in vain, as the latter, by suddenly rising in the air, escaped the coming blow. This pair of birds followed the kestrel for a great way, until they were all lost to sight in the distance. In the wood at Cultra I was once (at the end of April) witness to a single missel thrush boldly attacking a kestrel, which fled before it. The courage of the thrush was further evinced by its flying to the summit of the highest pine in the plantation, from which commanding site it for a long time proudly looked defiance against all comers; but, by superior numbers, missel thrushes are, like their betters, sometimes overpowered. This happened at the Falls on one occasion, when a pair of gray crows (*Corvus cornix*) joined, or it may be followed, in the wake of a pair of magpies in their assault on a nest, and the thrushes were unfortunately routed. A pair of these birds which bred at the residence of a gentleman of my acquaintance near Belfast, in the summer of 1837, flew angrily towards himself whenever he walked in the direction of their nest. But the missel thrush can exhibit boldness without its nest being attacked. At the end of June, 1848, a friend brought from Scotland to his residence, near Belfast, four young peregrine falcons. The first day that these birds, then full grown, were placed out of doors upon their blocks, contiguously, four in a row, they were assailed by a missel thrush, which for several hours continued dashing down at them, and all but, if not actually, striking them occasionally. No reason, such as having a nest in the vicinity, &c., could be assigned for the thrush's inhospitable welcome to the Scotch falcons.

I am assured by Mr. James R. Garrett, that he has several times known one of a pair of missel thrushes to be killed in the breeding season, and in every such instance another mate was soon found to supply the loss.

The few nests which I have particularly examined, were outwardly composed of larch or birch twigs and strong grasses; the interstices being filled up with mosses and *jungermanniæ*; they were lined in the bottom with fine grasses. There was no structure that could, correctly, be designated "a substantial wall of clay" (Architecture of Birds, p. 210). The bottom generally contained a portion of it; but in one nest there was not a particle of clay, nor any other substance that could be used in "masonry." Mr. Poole remarks:—"The nest is not, so far as my experience goes, (nor, it may be added, mine either) attached by lichens or anything else to the tree in which it is built. The materials composing it are remarkably heterogeneous; sticks, moss, grass, wool, feathers or shavings; and once, a portion of a newspaper entered into the composition."—This gentleman adds, that he has "known this bird to build, successively in the same fork of a tree for several years." The indiscriminate nature of the materials used in the structure of its nest by the missel thrush, has indeed, occasionally, brought against it the charge of pilfering, as in the following instances.

Some years ago, a lady residing near Ballymena lost in the spring a lace cap which had been laid on the grass to dry. In the autumn, when the leaves began to fall, something white appeared in one of the trees, and on inspection, proved to be the missing cap, which had been used by one of these birds in the construction of its nest.

I had evidence of a similar depredation, but of a minor degree of turpitude, being committed; a narrow piece of net, a yard in length, which was carried off when bleaching, being afterwards, in my presence, found composing part of a nest.

Like some others of the genus, the missel-thrush is, in England, noticed only as an early songster; but, except in the moulting season, its song may occasionally be heard in Ireland at every

period of the year, and frequently in winter. Within the first fortnight of December, 1832, I heard it sing on the mornings of five different days; and on the 7th of the ensuing month two were heard at the same time. Under December the 2nd, 1838, it was noted at the Falls, that during the preceding eight days there had been most severe gales from the east and west, through the stormiest period of which—chiefly in the morning—this bird was heard singing, as is its habit during storms in the spring. On the 26th of December, 1845, it was heard singing at the Falls for the first time that season.

As soon as the breeding season is over, these birds assemble either in families or large flocks—generally unassociated with other species—and are very destructive to the fruit in certain gardens and orchards about Belfast. On the 5th of July, I once saw two or three families congregated; and on the 1st of August, 1832, fifty-four were reckoned in a flock in the garden at the Falls, where, during the month, they consumed almost the entire crop of raspberries. Several of the young birds were caught in rat-traps baited with this fruit. At the end of August the same year, they resorted in such numbers to an orchard, containing the most venerable fruit-trees in the vicinity of the town, that on one morning twenty-six, and on the next, seventeen of them were shot, and, with one or two exceptions, singly: late cherries were the attraction. Missel-thrushes were that year more than usually abundant. In 1833, the report of the gardener at the Falls was not, however, very satisfactory;—that since they had eaten the greater part of the raspberries, and had cleared the trees of the late crop of cherries, he had not seen many. In the months of July and August in 1837 and 1838, but especially in the latter year, they were likewise most destructive to the raspberries here, and appeared in flocks consisting of forty or fifty individuals at a time. The injury was not confined to the mere loss of the fruit, but was increased by their weight breaking off the shoots on which it grew. Scarecrows attired after the fashion of men, and a rattle, such as is erected in fields of grain to frighten off feathered depredators, were used against them with some effect. I have been

thus particular, as similar depredations on the part of this species have not been related in any ornithological work with which I am acquainted. In his History of Selborne, White remarks, that "missel-thrushes do not destroy the fruit in our gardens like other species of *Turdi*," and on this passage (so far as I have noticed) not one of his numerous commentators has made an observation. Sir Wm. Jardine* particularizes only "*wild*-berries" as their food; hence we may conclude that the gardens known to him have been exempt from their attacks. In an anonymous contribution to Loudon's Magazine of Natural History, facts similar to those I have brought forward are recorded (vol. iv. p. 184).

The stomachs of two individuals, examined by me in January and September, contained the remains of coleopterous insects in addition to vegetable matter. Mr. J. Poole mentions "lob-worms" as their general food, but that in one stomach he found several small green caterpillars, some *Scolopendræ*, and the remains of a lizard. These birds vary much in numbers in different years, and are capricious as to localities, not a flock, either large or small, being seen in some seasons at places where they are usually common. I have been particularly reminded of this by not seeing one about Holywood House during the autumn of 1847, while in that of 1846, and commonly, they were in such numbers, that from twenty to thirty would be seen at a time feeding on the berries of the mountain-ash trees (*Pyrus aucuparia*) near the windows of the dwelling-house.

Friends who have had better opportunities for observation than myself, are of opinion that the flocks seen in July and August about Belfast, and believed to be bred there, migrate southward, which supposition is strengthened by the statements of correspondents residing further south; and by the fact, that the birds are never seen in numbers during the winter, though a regular stock is kept up throughout the year. In Connemara, the species is said to be common in winter, and only at that season.† Its "average winter arrival" to the neighbourhood

* Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 77. † Mr. M'Calla.

of Toomavara, in the county of Tipperary, is noted by the Rev. T. Knox, to be about the 7th of November; in summer it is also met with there in pairs and limited numbers, as well as about Killaloe, his former residence.

Mr. Macgillivray remarks that he has not met with this bird in the northern division of Scotland (B. B. vol. ii. p. 121), but as many as thirty together were commonly seen by my friend Richard Langtry, about Aberarder—sixteen miles southward of the town of Inverness—in the autumn of 1838. They at first frequented the heath (adjacent to a wood), as he supposed for the purpose of feeding on the berries of the trailing Arbutus or bear-berry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), and afterwards destroyed the cherries in the garden, several at a time being engaged picking the fruit from a single tree. Over the southern portion of Scotland, the missel thrush is remarked by Sir William Jardine to be "generally distributed." It has, as in Ireland, increased much of late years. When on a visit in August, 1839, to a most observant sportsman, near Ballantrae, in Ayrshire, he remarked that this bird was quite unknown there until the few preceding years, within which time two of its nests were built near the village, and large flocks were seen at Auchairne; in the glens about which place there are extensive young plantations. On the 2nd of September, I remarked a flock of a dozen at Glen-tig, in the same district. In the summer of 1826, I met with this species in Switzerland, but not so commonly as in its favourite haunts in Ireland.

WHITE'S THRUSH.

Turdus Whitei, Eyton.

Has once occurred in Ireland,

As noticed by Mr. G. J. Allman (now Professor of Botany in Trinity College, Dublin,) in the 11th vol. of the Annals of Natural History, p. 78. The communication is dated Dec., 15th, 1842, and states that the writer is in possession of a specimen of this very rare bird, obtained about ten days previously in the neighbour-

hood of Bandon, county of Cork. It is said in the Fauna of Cork, that the gentleman at whose place the bird was obtained, saw what he believed to be another of the same species there; but when, is not mentioned.

Two specimens, at most, of *T. Whitei* have been obtained in Great Britain, and both in Hampshire. The one which has served for the descriptions and figures of the species was shot by Lord Malmesbury in January, 1828. The Irish specimen is similar to it. The following notes upon this bird were made in Dublin in September, 1845, when a comparison was also drawn up between it and a thrush from Nepal, so far as the imperfect specimens would admit:—the Irish bird wants the head and neck; the Nepal one, the legs. The latter specimen was presented by Mr. Hodgson to the museum of Trinity College, Dublin, under the name of *Oreocincla Whitei*, and noted as a duplicate of one (and numbered 194), which he had presented to the British Museum collection.

	Irish specimen	Nepal specimen
Length of wing	$6\frac{8}{12}$ inches	$5\frac{1}{2}$
First quill feather about equally short in both . .		
1st quill, tip from carpus, ...	$2\frac{3}{4}$	
3rd quill (longest), exceeding 4th (next in length)	$\frac{1}{12}$	
,, ,, 2nd	$\frac{2}{10}$	$\frac{3}{10}$
4th ,, ,, 5th	$\frac{4}{10}$	$\frac{1}{10}$*
5th ,, ,, 6th	$\frac{6}{10}$	$\frac{5}{10}$
6th ,, ,, 7th	$\frac{3}{10}$	
2nd ,, ,, 5th	$\frac{3}{8}$	
4th ,, ,, 2nd	$\frac{1}{6}$	
Tarsus	$1\frac{3}{10}$	

The tail of the Irish bird in length and size generally, exceeds that of the Nepal one, as much proportionally as the wing. In colouring and marking the two birds are similar,—agreeing with the descriptions and figures of Eyton and Yarrell,—with the

* This trivial difference is exceeded by one half in the other wing of the same specimen. In the one wing, the third and fourth quills are of equal length; in the other, the fourth exceeds the third by one-twelfth of an inch.

unimportant difference of the Irish one being the deeper in tint, owing, it may be presumed, either to its being killed sooner after moult, or being less exposed to the sun and weather than the Nepal bird. The mere disagreement in size between them is not, I consider, of any specific consequence; but the discrepancy in the relative length of the quill feathers to each other may be so considered, should it prove to be a permanent character.

THE FIELDFARE.

Blue Pigeon, or Big Felt.

Turdus pilaris, Linn.

Is a regular winter visitant,

Appearing generally in the north towards the end of October or beginning of November. In 1840, they did not arrive at the Falls, near Belfast, until the 9th of November, on the morning of which day a flock was seen there by Wm. Sinclaire, Esq., at a great height in the air, coming from a north-easterly direction: this gentleman is of opinion that in the course of the preceding moonlight night, they may have come in one flight direct from Norway.

The first redwings of the season made their appearance at the Falls, under precisely similar circumstances, after a fine moonlight night a month before. So early as the 24th of September, 1847, I saw a small flock of fieldfares at Holywood House (co. of Down) and a larger flock of redwings; they were quite separate. The first arrival of the fieldfare in the county of Wexford has been noted in different years from the 20th of September to the 2nd of November.* Mr. Macgillivray mentions its appearing in "the northern and eastern parts of Britain" (vol. ii. p. 108) at the end of October or beginning of November. Sir Wm. Jardine, writing from Dumfries-shire, remarks, that "its time of arrival is late in November" (vol. ii. p. 81). I am assured by Mr. Richard Langtry that early in September, 1838, he raised two or three fieldfares from among juniper bushes, at Aberarder, Inverness-shire. On the 28th of September, 1843, I saw several of these

* Poole.

birds at Ballochmorrie, in Ayrshire; and when at Dunskey, Wigtonshire, in the middle of October of the following year, I observed large flocks.

This bird remains until a late period in spring. In seven different years, flocks were observed about Belfast, from the middle to the end of April, and continued until the latter period in two years (1834 and 1842), although there had been some weeks of fine summer-like weather previously, which we might imagine would have tempted them to move northwards.

On the evening of the 7th of May, 1836, Mr. W. Sinclaire, when at his residence, the Falls, observed a large flock migrating in a north-east direction, and heard them calling as they passed overhead. They were considered to be on their way from some distant locality, as none had been seen in his neighbourhood for some time before. But when the season was as far advanced in the very late spring of 1837, fieldfares still frequented their winter quarters there, the great body of them remaining longer than ever before known. They likewise remained in the county of Kerry in the spring of 1837, until the end of April, which is later than had been before noticed.* The middle of April is the latest time at which they have been met with in the county of Wexford;† but at Ballinderry, on the borders of Lough Neagh, about a dozen of these birds were seen in a hedge-row, in 1842, so late as the 31st of May; their call was heard, and the blue of the back distinctly seen, so that no mistake could have been made respecting the species. Sir Wm. Jardine remarks, that the "great body remigrate during the month of May." The ordinary arrival of the species in the north of Ireland, and its departure thence, certainly take place at earlier periods than the south (?) of Scotland, as noticed in that author's work.

The Rev. Thomas Knox of Toomavara remarks in a letter to me, with respect to his present neighbourhood, and Killaloe, his former residence, that the fieldfares are not so numerous, and are always later in appearing than the redwings; that if the weather be mild, they retire in the middle of winter for weeks together, but

* Rev. T. Knox. † Mr. Poole.

that one or two nights of frost are certain to bring them back again. When they disappear, he thinks they visit the mountains. Such, likewise, are their habits in the north, as in the open weather, they frequent the upland districts, but are driven to the lowlands by frost and snow.* Their favourite haunts around Belfast are the fields skirting the base of the mountains, more especially those surrounded by tall white-thorn hedges, which for the sake of shelter have been permitted to grow to maturity in a state of unpruned and wild luxuriance. Although frequently associating with the redwing, the fieldfare may be considered as preferring localities of a wilder nature than those usually resorted to by that bird, and is accordingly, in such places the more common of the two species.

My correspondents in Kerry and Wexford mention the ground as being the ordinary roosting-place of the fieldfare. When returning at a late hour from hunting, I have several times in the short days of winter raised flocks of fieldfares that were roosting near the summit of heath-clad hills considerably distant from their daily haunts, as well as from any hedges or plantations. Mr. R. Ball mentions his having once seen a flock of about five hundred perched for the night on a spruce-fir near Youghal, and that fieldfares and redwings in large flocks—"a stream of them"—pass over the Zoological Gardens, Dublin, commonly in the winter, to roost in the Phœnix Park. The flight of the fieldfare is well described by Mr. Macgillivray, whose description of its habits generally is very good; as is that also of Sir Wm. Jardine.

I have little doubt, from having at such times remarked their scarcity, that when a severe frost sets gradually in, fieldfares generally leave, as in England, the northern parts of this country. Though the species is naturally wild and difficult of approach, such individuals as remain behind are driven to the bogs, ditches, and drains, in quest of food, and suffer so severely from hunger and cold combined, as to become easy victims to the most juvenile sportsmen. A note, dated Belfast, 1st of December, 1846, is to the effect, that for the last few days a severe frost prevailed,

* See Journal of a Naturalist, p. 259, third ed. for the opposite procedure.

which had been preceded by snow. Two wild-fowl shooters who were out in the bay every morning for a week previous to the commencement of the frost, heard large flocks of these birds flying overhead before daybreak. They all came from a northerly and proceeded in a southerly direction. The frost and snow setting in northwards probably before it reached us may have compelled the birds to migrate to a more genial climate. There was no moonlight at the time.

On the 27th and 28th of January, 1848, when hard frost had for some time prevailed, and the ground was sparingly covered, with snow, an accurate observer, for a long time watched a large flock of from 150 to 200 of these birds, in a field of Swedish turnips at Island hill, near Strangford Lough. Lying behind the fence, hidden by a furze or whin-bush, he was within four yards of the nearest, and saw that the birds generally over the field were engaged pecking eagerly at the roots of the turnip. They were very pugnacious, attacking each other like game-cocks; a couple thus engaged, sometimes springing even two feet into the air; never less than about a dozen pair were thus off the ground at the same time. This singular appearance was the means of attracting from a distance the attention of my informant to the spot. When a couple were fighting, a third often came up and attacked one of them, which was no sooner done, than the previous combatant so relieved betook itself again to turnip-feeding. They never fought long,—"only two or three blows at a time,"—but kept up a continual feast and continual battle. On afterwards examining the turnips in the field, he saw, to his surprise, considering their being hard frozen, and the weak bills of the birds, that they had to a great extent been eaten by the fieldfares. As water would lodge where the roots had been pecked, they would, he conceived, be rotted in consequence, to the serious damage of the crop. Five of these birds having been shot and brought to Belfast, I had an opportunity of examining their stomachs; which, even before being opened, all smelled strongly of turnips, and on being cut into, were found to be filled exclusively with that

vegetable. The entire flesh also when dressed, partook strongly of the flavour of the turnip.

As a difference of opinion exists among authors on the subject of the fieldfare's food, I give the contents of the stomachs of seven other individuals examined by me, and which were killed at various times and places during two seasons. Of these, one contained two *limacelli*, (internal shells of naked snails belonging to the genus *Limax*, Linn.) the remains of coleopterous insects, and some vegetable matter; this last substance only appeared in the second; the third was filled with oats alone, though the weather was mild, and had been so for some time before; the fourth contained worms and bits of grass; these last, together with pieces of straw and the husks of grain, were found in the fifth,—the weather was severe and frosty for a week previously; the sixth was stored with the husks, and one grain of oats; the seventh, obtained in mild weather, was filled with the stones of haws of the white-thorn. These birds have often been observed by a person of my acquaintance regaling on the haws or fruit of that plant, during frosty weather.

Mr. Hewitson remarks: — "The fieldfare is the most abundant bird in Norway, and is generally diffused over that part of the country which we visited, from Drontheim to the Arctic circle. It builds in society. Two hundred nests or upwards may be found within a small circuit of the forest." * Nothing is said of its song. The fieldfare "only arrives in Provence when the cold is excessive at the beginning of winter. It stays in the wildest places, and departs at the approach of spring. It does not cross the [Mediterranean] sea." †

THE COMMON OR SONG THRUSH.

Turdus musicus, Linn.

Is plentiful, and resident throughout the island.

Although I have seen flocks of thrushes late in autumn, I am of

* Egg's Brit. Birds, p. 58.

† M. Duval-Jouve in Zoologist, October, 1845, p. 1118.

opinion (as is Mr. Selby with regard to Northumberland,) that they are not our indigenous birds which so congregate, but that such bodies are on their migration from more northern countries. As confirmative of this view, there does not seem to be any diminution of the species in its accustomed haunts, nor are flocks seen, except for a short time at a particular season.

In England the thrush is considered only as an early songster, beginning its melody at earliest by the end of January (Selby), and continuing it until July (Jenyns). But in Ireland, where our winters are milder, its song, even in the north, is continued in fine weather throughout the year, excepting at the moulting period, and, as if the bird felt the winter day too brief, its melody does not cease when the sun goes down. In December, 1831, I heard it at Wolf-hill, on the 5th, 30 minutes; on the 19th, 40 minutes; and on the 26th, 45 minutes after sunset. Similar memoranda were made in December, 1835, 1837, and 1839, when so many thrushes and robins were sometimes singing at the same time as to produce quite a concert, broken in upon occasionally by the harsh call of the missel thrush.* In summer, too, the notes of the song thrush are sometimes prolonged until a very late hour. On the 27th of May, I once heard them at half past nine o'clock, P.M.; as a friend on one occasion did about midsummer, at a quarter to ten o'clock, P.M. I once, on the 15th of June, listened to its song at Wolf-hill, so early as a quarter past two o'clock, A.M., at which hour on the 16th of that month in another year, it was heard at the Falls: followed a few minutes afterwards, by the note of the cuckoo, and the song of the swallow. When travelling in the month of June over a very wild mountain tract covered with heath, between Cushendall and Ballycastle, (co. Antrim,) and some miles distant from any trees, I heard two thrushes singing: the nearer one, which I saw and listened to for some time, was perched on a dead ragweed (*Senecio Jacobæa*) that overtopped the heath. The next day one appeared at a still wilder

* Mr. Poole, writing of the county of Wexford, remarks on his having heard thrushes, sky-larks, and hedge-sparrows sing during a very hard frost.

place near the summit of the noble promontory of Fairhead. One or two pairs are said to inhabit the island of Rathlin,* a similar locality. Mr. Macgillivray, who gives a long and good account of the thrush, mentions it as abundant in the Hebrides, where it may be heard singing from the pinnacles of the rocks. B. B. vol. ii. p. 130.

This bird breeds early in the north of Ireland; sometimes in the month of March, and not uncommonly before the middle of April, incubation has commenced. The favourite sites chosen for the nest are ever-green shrubs, young trees, and beech hedges, yet even where these abound, the thrush not unfrequently prefers placing it in the holes of walls and beneath the roof of sheds. In one of the latter situations, I knew a pair to build on the top of the wall just beneath the slates, for three successive summers. The nest was exposed to view from every part of the house which, too, was in the midst of shrubberies and plantations. The site was such as the swallow would select, and similar to one I have known the robin appropriate to itself in a yard in Belfast. Thrushes' nests at the Falls are sometimes placed among moss on ditch-banks overshadowed by ferns (*Aspidii*) or the rank hemlock. A nest in a pear-tree in the garden there, near to which is a hay-loft, was with the exception of its inner clay coating, constructed entirely of hay. A relative, who has attended to the nidification of birds, once found the nest of a thrush containing five eggs, on the ground in a meadow at Wolf-hill,—a place with grass about two feet high waving over it. This place abounded in such situations as are usually selected. Of four nests observed there in one season, two were in the holes of walls; a third was built among ivy against a wall, and the fourth beneath the roof of a small out-house:—a favourite place, always chosen when the opportunity offered, was among heaps of the small branches of trees lying on the ground in a corner of the garden, and ready for use as pea-rods. In a garden a few miles distant, the blackbird took possession of heaps of similar branches for its nest.

* Dr. J. D. Marshall.

The thrush has commonly a second brood: several memoranda are before me of young birds being unfledged late in August, and on one occasion the young were unable to leave the nest before the 1st of October. The following remarkable instance of fecundity, &c., which seems worthy of being fully detailed, has been furnished me by Mr. Edward Benn:—"Very early in 1836, a thrush built her nest in a beech hedge in our garden, at Saul, near Downpatrick. When the leaves were blown from the beech by the gales of early spring, she was quite exposed to view sitting on the nest, but on perceiving herself looked at, remained there without being disturbed. We commenced feeding her with worms, which, to avoid startling her by a too near approach, were offered on the end of a long rod; then with bread, which was taken from the hand. She soon became as tame as domestic fowl. There were three young. When these were fledged, a second nest was formed near the same place, and she fed as before, but in a bolder manner. There were in this instance five young. When these were well grown, so as to fill the nest, she would perch on the edge, and feed from the hand, allow her plumage to be gently smoothed down, but if too much disturbed, became noisy, and struck with her wings at the intruder. When this brood could provide for themselves, a third nest was constructed, the parent bird was fed as formerly, and five young were produced. These gone; a fourth nest was built at the farther end of the hedge from the house, and a person going to feed her here one morning as usual, remarked her in great consternation on the bank, and found the nest torn to pieces. A day or two afterwards, she began the erection of a fifth, and, evidently for the sake of protection, chose in this instance, a site quite close to the house. Four young got off in safety, after which we saw her no more. Thus in one season, five nests were formed, and seventeen young produced.* Thirty persons at least witnessed what is here related, and fed the bird in her nest. She was indifferent to the presence of strangers." Mr. Benn attributes the fecundity of this bird to its being par-

* An instance of a blackbird producing three broods in the *same nest* is mentioned in p. 144.

ticularly well fed, instancing in support of that view, the much greater number of eggs laid by a well fed domestic hen than by an ill fed one.

A friend mentioned to me, that in 1837, he had very frequently observed a thrush on coming to feed its young, pick up and swallow their mutings: this was its invariable practice, and the nest being within view of the windows of the house, several persons as well as himself, were witnesses to the proceeding.

Observations made on a pair of thrushes which had their nest in the ivy on one of the walls at Wolf-hill in 1847, were as follows:—That on wet days the male bird invariably fed the young, the female leaving the nest on his approach, and going to about a yard's distance from it during the time her mate was so employed. On fine days the female fed them, and the male sang perched on the top of a neighbouring tall tree. It was particularly remarked, that the female on going back to the nest after the male had fed the young, invariably eat all their mutings. In the second volume of Macgillivray's Brit. Birds, which appeared in 1839, similar observations of Mr. Weir's are recorded (p. 138). To the volume itself I must refer for this gentleman's most interesting notes, on the number of times that a pair of thrushes fed their young during twenty-four hours; notes on the blackbird to the same effect will be found at p. 93 of the volume.

Although thrushes are very destructive to our cherries and other fruits, the admiration in which their song is held generally pleads so strongly in their favour as to save them from destruction. In a friend's garden near Belfast, I have known a few of them to forfeit their lives by eating of the fruit, with which traps were baited for blackbirds. In the hothouse at the same place, the gardener one day caught three or four of them regaling on his grapes, which reminds us of their partiality to this fruit in continental countries. By several British authors, *Helix nemoralis* is particularized as a favourite repast with this species, to which one author adds the *H. hortensis*, (Jour. of a Nat. p. 339,) and another the *H. lucida*, (Wern. Mem. vol. iii. p. 180,) but its

predilection for such food is far from being limited to these species. The beautiful *Helix arbustorum*, whose delicate shell is much more easily broken than that of the others, is an especial favourite. So eagerly is it sought for by the thrush, (and probably also by the blackbird,) that in some localities, in which the fragments of broken shells first announced to me its contiguity, I have found it difficult to obtain specimens after the successful foraging of the birds.

In addition to the naked or externally shelless snails, insects (coleoptera, larvæ, chrysalides), worms, seeds, and soft vegetable matter, the smaller *Helices* and other land shells form in winter a very considerable portion of the thrush's food.* From a single stomach I have taken the *Helix cellaria*, *H. pura*, and *H. radiata*, in addition to *Limacelli*; and have similarly met with the *Bulimus lubricus*, and *Vitrina pellucida*. I once, at the end of February, found several specimens of this last species in one bird; which contained also five shells of *Limaces*, (the snails themselves being wholly digested,) a coleopterous and another insect, together with chrysalides and larvæ.

The intelligent gamekeeper at Tollymore Park (Down), remarked to me in 1836, that when living in Ayrshire some years before that time with the Marquess of Bute, he had seen four pair of cream-coloured thrushes in one season; that they bred and had also young of the same colour, some of which were attempted to be reared, but unsuccessfully. They were observed but in the one season.

It is interesting to remark how birds will follow their nests when removed from their original situations, as in the instances about to be related, which occurred in the neighbourhood of Belfast. In May, 1847, a thrush's nest built in a tree at a considerable height from the ground, was, when containing five eggs, brought down about six feet and placed on a branch. The bird followed it and sat on the eggs as usual. It was then brought down eight or nine feet lower, until it could be looked into by a person standing on the ground; the bird followed it here also, and continued

* Since these notes were first published, Mr. Macgillivray has remarked that "*Helix aspersa*, *hortensis*, *nemoralis*, supply great part of its food in winter," p. 133.

to sit on the eggs until the brood was produced. Two of the young were taken out of the nest when they were ready to be transferred to a cage, but the thrush nevertheless continued to tend the remaining three, until they all took wing. A grey-linnet's nest containing young was put in a cage, into which the parent bird went regularly to feed them. The cage was then moved gradually nearer and nearer to the cottage, until at last brought within doors, whither the parent bird followed and fed the young.

Sky-larks have frequently been known to follow their nests when shifted by boys from place to place—occasionally several times in a day—across a field, or until the young were put in a cage, and placed beside the cottage. The parent lark then alighted on a little piece of board placed outside the cage as a perch for her, and from it, fed the young regularly through the wires. In such instances, the cottages were in the fields. In other cases, when the young were so far advanced as not to require the warmth derived from the parent sitting on the nest, this was rodded over to prevent their escape when fledged, and the old bird came and fed them. Both these practices respecting sky-larks, and more especially the former one, were common some years ago in the county of Down.

THE REDWING.

Felt. Small Felt.

Turdus iliacus, Linn.

Is a regular winter visitant, its migration, like that of the fieldfare, extending over the island.

In the north, it generally arrives about the middle of October,* sometimes early in the month; and remains until the beginning or middle of April: to the end of this month its departure was

* A sporting friend remarks that he never saw redwings so plentiful any where as at Aberarder, Inverness-shire, from the end of the first week, until the 18th of October, 1840.

delayed in the very late spring of 1837. Its average arrival in the neighbourhood of Killaloe is said to take place in the first week of November;* about Wexford, at the end of October.† The redwing is stated to be more common than the fieldfare in Kerry; and in the north it likewise prevails numerically over that species. They often associate together: both were remarked by an observant friend to be unusally scarce in the north-east of Ireland and south-west of Scotland, in the winter of 1838–39. What has been said on the haunts and occasional migration of the fieldfare equally applies to the redwing. In the severe winter of 1813, these birds were so reduced about Youghal that several of both species were killed by my informant with a stick thrown from the hand. In the north, that winter was remarkably fatal to birds generally. I have never met with redwings roosting on the ground like fieldfares, but instead, in hedge-rows and thick plantations. A favourite locality in which they in different years came under my observation, was a dense plantation of larch-firs of about fifteen years growth on a hill side, where their concerts, like those of grey-linnets, before going to roost were most agreeable. But in the morning and forenoon likewise, during fine weather, chiefly towards the spring, a flock of redwings from a hedge or plantation will sometimes delight us with a most agreeable concert, and a single bird will occasionally utter a few melodious notes. A friend, who has frequently heard these notes at Cromac (Belfast), compares them to those of the grey-linnet (*Fringilla cannabina*), remarking at the same time, that they are always uttered in a low subdued tone. When we know that the melody of this species has obtained for it the name of the nightingale of Norway,‡ what is here mentioned should probably be re-

* Rev. T. Knox. † Mr. Poole.

‡ Mr. Hewitson who mentions its bearing this name remarks:—"In our long rambles through the boundless forest scenery of Norway, or during our visits to some of its thousand isles, whether by night or by day, the loud, wild, and most delicious song of the redwing seldom failed to cheer us." Eggs Brit. Birds, p. 61. The same author informs us that "the nest of the redwing is placed, like those of the thrush and blackbird, in the centre of a thorn or other thick bush. It is similar to those of the blackbird, fieldfare, and ring ouzel." p. 62.

garded only as a mode of repeating its notes, called by bird-fanciers "recording."

Of the stomachs of three redwings opened by me, one (in January) contained the remains of insects, two shells of *Helix cellaria*, and one of *H. radiata*; two (in December) exhibited worms, vegetable food, chiefly bits of grass, remains of coleopterous insects, and several *Limacelli*; one had in addition two of the *Bulimus lubricus*, a *Helix hispida*, and three of *H. rufescens*: some of these shells were perfect.

THE BLACKBIRD.

Turdus merula, Linn.

Is common and resident throughout the wooded districts of Ireland.

They likewise resort to the islands off the coasts. In the summer of 1827 I remarked them among the underwood sparingly scattered over the Lighthouse island (one of the Copelands), off the county of Down. Dr. J. D. Marshall mentions one or two being occasionally seen in the wild island of Rathlin, about a garden where they sometimes breed. The indigenous birds do not congregate with us, nor have I ever heard of flocks being seen in any part of this country on their migration from the north of Europe, as they have been in England.* They are indeed stated to be more numerous about Tralee (co. Kerry) in winter than in summer, but their comparative scarcity at the latter season is attributed to the want of woods and thickets wherein to build.

In the middle of June, I have heard the blackbird sing at Wolf-hill as early in the morning as a quarter past 2 o'clock. In 1832, it was noted as ceasing its song about the middle of June, soon after which time the thrush also ceased: so late as the 25th of July, 1845, the blackbird's song was heard near Belfast. Captain Walker of Belmont, Wexford, remarked in a letter to me,

* Selby's Illustr. of Brit. Orn. vol. i. p. 167, second edition.

dated November, 1836, that "last year numbers of people went to Mr. Boxwell's of Lyngestown, to hear a blackbird in his shrubberies, that clapped his wings and crew like a bantam cock." In a letter from Edward Benn, Esq., dated Oakland, Broughshane (county of Antrim), August 31st, 1840, a bird possessed of the same ludicrous accomplishment, is thus noticed: "We have not yet done with our old friend the crowing blackbird. A man wishing to have some of his breed, robbed the nest, which contained four young; two he left, and the other two he put into a large cage, and removed to his house. The old cock came constantly with food for the young in the cage, going into it and feeding them; the man watching for such an opportunity, made a run at the cage and secured him, but when carrying it into the house, the bird made his escape through a hole in the wires. It was supposed he would not come back: he, however, returned to feed the young as usual; but instead of going into the cage, he went to the outside and put the worm through the wires. It may have been instinct that prompted him to find food for his young, though removed to a distance, and in an unusual place; but when he found there was danger in feeding them in the old way, it certainly showed calculation to find out a way of doing it equally well without running risk. It was also very curious to see him going to feed the young when any person was watching:—the cage was in a potato garden, and he would fly to the low end of the garden and creep up the furrow so that it was impossible to see him, until he had finished his duty, when he flew off with great noise. The hen never appeared, and it was supposed she had been killed. To all that is here stated, I was a witness, though not fortunate enough to hear him crow, as he entirely ceased early in summer."

A crowing blackbird is particularly noticed in the 4th volume of Loudon's Magazine of Natural History, p. 433.

The blackbird builds early in the north of Ireland, often commencing about the middle of March and occasionally sooner. In the unusually early spring of 1846, the following occurred in the

neighbourhood of Belfast.* On the 22nd of February a nest with three eggs was seen; on the 1st of April, the young made their appearance in a nest at the Falls; on the 14th of this month a nest containing three young birds some time "out," was discovered at Cromac House. Three broods were produced in this nest, the last of which made their appearance on the 3rd of July. The three broods followed immediately after each other, and were all seen by Mr. J. R. Garrett, to whom the nest itself from first to last, did not seem in the least degree altered.† The nest is generally placed in low situations,‡ as in small shrubs, white-thorn hedges, among ivy on the stem of a tree or on a wall, &c: —the obvious difference between it and that of the thrush, as remarked by my friend at the Falls, is, the latter being lined with clay or cow-dung *only*, the former with grasses, &c., although either of the two substances just named is also used in its construction. Mr. Macgillivray describes the blackbird's nest very particularly (B. B. vol. ii. p. 90). This species, like the missel thrush, has the good taste, when an opportunity presents itself, of lining its nest with lace. A valuable piece of this material, which had been laid out to bleach in a garden at Larne, belonging to a lady of my acquaintance, was carried off, and the servant was blamed for the theft; but when winter came, the missing article was found lining a blackbird's nest. A correspondent mentions a nest of this species having for its foundation the nest of a ring-dove of the preceding year.

In the north of Ireland, blackbirds are very destructive to fruits of almost every kind; in many gardens around Belfast,

* A brief "Comparison of the Periods of Flowering of certain Plants in the early spring of 1846, in the Botanic Garden of Belfast, and the Jardin des Plantes at Paris," drawn up by the author, will be found in the 19th volume of the Annals of Natural History, p. 223–226.

† My informant surmised that the first and second broods had, on leaving the nest, fallen victims to cats, which were in the habit of visiting the locality.

‡ Professor Wilson is aware of this, and treating of the bird in his own eloquent manner, places the nest at the foot of a silver fir, from the top of which the male pours forth his song.—Recreat: *Chr. North*, vol. iii. p. 14.

even apples and pears suffer much from them: as they are likewise said to do in the county of Wexford. To the earlier fruits in a friend's garden near Belfast, these birds were so injurious in the summer of 1833, when they were particularly abundant, that he had recourse to the common rat-trap for their destruction. It was baited with currants, cherries, and early peas; and although exposed to view,* forty of these birds soon fell victims to it, three thrushes at the same time sharing a similar fate. When a cherry and pear were placed on the trap, the former was always preferred. All of these birds but one were caught by the neck, thus proving that they were secured when in the act of pecking at the fruit.

The large amount of good which the blackbird does, in the destruction of snails and insects injurious to vegetation, is rarely considered as counterbalancing its frugivorous propensity. Nets to protect the fruit are certainly allowable; but I should be sorry to bear evil intent against this handsome and lively bird, which renders us essential service, and is, besides, so sweet a songster.

The whole truth, however, respecting its proceedings, be they good or bad, must be told. On observing some plants in the Belfast Botanic Garden in January, 1837, that had been much injured by birds, I learned from the curator, that even in mild weather, he had seen blackbirds tearing up different species of saxifrage; hardly a fragment remained of plants of *Saxifraga pedatifida* and *S. trifurcata,* though each had formed a round clump at least a yard in diameter. Beside these, a similarly large patch of *S. hypnoides* appeared untouched; but this species had been attacked in another part of the garden. In the present instance it was uninjured, apparently in consequence of forming a more compact mass, and its green surface foliage was, besides, so dense, that insects, &c., could hardly lodge beneath. Moss, covering the roots of trees here, was likewise much torn away, doubtless in the search for living objects.

In our mountain glens, I observed, many years ago, during winter, tufts of the rein-deer lichen (*Cladonia rangiferina*) lying

* For many species, such as the magpie, hooded crow, &c., the trap requires to be concealed, the bait only being visible.

strewn about, and inferred that it had been torn up by either the thrush or blackbird in search of food: from what is just stated, there can be little doubt of the correctness of my inference. Mr. Moore, now curator of the Botanic Garden, Glasnevin, Dublin, informed me in the last-mentioned year, that when he was in the College Botanic Garden near that city, he remarked several species of plants to be much injured by birds; and more especially the rare alpine plant, *Cherleria sedoides*. In the month of September of two different years, I remarked an old male blackbird regaling on the flowers of a fine large bushy *Fuchsia coccinea*, in the midst of which he remained for a considerable time; on the former occasion, which was at the end of the month, the plant was profusely in berry, but retained only a few flowers,—the last ones of summer,—yet of these only did he partake; in the other instance it was covered with bloom. In the middle of June, 1843, two of my relatives living at Ballysillan, in the neighbourhood of Belfast, were attracted during a few successive days by numbers of blackbirds, thrushes, sparrows, and robins, flying to the grass of the verdure garden before the windows of the house, and bearing off white objects in their bills:—on going to the place, my friends found some of them, which on being brought to me, proved to be all ghost moths (*Hepialus humuli*). A blackbird which was often seen about the parlour window at a friend's country-house, was fed during frost with crumbs of bread thrown beneath a tree within view of the house; others came to join in the repast, and were sometimes beaten away by it, as was a missel thrush, which —though its superior in size, and a bolder species—was not permitted to pick up a morsel. The presumption was, that the same blackbird "ruled the roast" all the time, and was bold and confident from the locality being its home. Robins may often be seen driving strange birds of their own species from their "beats." Birds of various kinds have not only their homes, where they act like man in considering "his house his castle," but lay claim also to the regions round about, and drive all others of the species from their locality.

In the stomachs of thirteen blackbirds examined by me in November, December, and January, in various years, were haws, seeds, and soft vegetable matter, coleopterous and other insects and their larvæ, earth worms, *limacelli*, &c.: in three were land-shells, one stomach alone exhibiting six specimens of *Bulimus lubricus*, and ten of *Helix radiata*;—the weather was mild when this bird was obtained, as it was when another filled with haws was procured. Minute Coleoptera were the most abundant food. In summer, I have seen the *Helix nemoralis* attacked by this species. During frost, the blackbird suffers much, and irrigated meadows are favourite feeding-ground: as are ditch-banks, overgrown with brambles, in winter generally.

In the winter of 1813–14, there was an extremely severe and long-continued frost in the north of Ireland. At the commencement of the thaw, above a hundred birds, chiefly blackbirds and thrushes, were found floating dead on the stream flowing from a spring at Ballynafeigh, near Belfast. It was believed that the birds had been tempted to the place by the spring (which at its immediate source remained unfrozen) and by the comparative shelter of overhanging trees. Water was extremely scarce in the neighbourhood. The birds were considered to have foundered from time to time during the continuance of the frost, though noticed only on its breaking up.

Several native specimens of the blackbird variegated with white —in some instances obviously the result of disease—have come under my notice in Belfast; the tarsi and toes were sometimes marked with white. Correspondents mention the occurrence of these varieties in all quarters of the island. A friend has remarked two pied ones at the same time flying about his demesne. A few notes on the subject may be given. January 20th, 1838. I was shown by Mr. Wm. Marshall, of Belfast, a male blackbird, either twenty or twenty-one years old, which had been taken from the nest by a waiter at an hotel in Dungannon, and kept by him from that period until a few days ago, when it died. Its entire head was bald or destitute of feathers; the wings displayed as much white as black; the quills being white, and the coverts black.

In the Belfast Commercial Chronicle of December 25, 1839, the following paragraph appeared under the heading of

"A VENERABLE BLACKBIRD. — There is at present in the possession of Mr. John Spence, of Tullaghgarley, near Ballymena, a blackbird that has arrived at the wonderful age of twenty years and nearly eight months. It was taken by him from the nest when young, and ever since has enjoyed the very best of health. It still continues to sing, and that well. He feeds him on potatoes baked up with a little oatmeal, of which he is uncommonly fond. He is, however, beginning to shew symptoms of old age, his head is getting grey, and a number of white feathers are springing up on his neck and breast."

January 12, 1843, I saw at Mr. Nichol's, bird-preserver, Belfast, a female blackbird with a pure white head, and which was otherwise singular in having the entire upper plumage black like a male, while the under plumage was that of a female. This caused persons equally skilled in the species to differ in opinion respecting its sex; it proved on dissection to be a female. The bird had been observed (the white head marking it) for two years about a country house, and was carefully protected from shooters, but unfortunately at last fell a victim to a rat-trap, in which it was captured. Mr. Davis of Clonmel has mentioned a male blackbird with a white head having been picked up in a dying state on the 18th of January, 1848, at Rocklow, near Fethard, where it had been known for the preceeding fifteen years, and had come every day at luncheon hour to be fed. A pure white one is said to have been taken in the summer of 1845, from a nest at Monkstown, in which were three others of the ordinary colour.*

Mr. Richard Langtry, after returning in 1838, from shooting at Aberarder, Inverness-shire, where he had spent three months, informed me that no blackbirds were seen, although there is much wood towards the base of the mountains: when there myself during the month of September, 1842, I did not meet with one of these birds, although there are extensive woods and trees

* Mr. R. Warren, junr., Castle Warren, Cork.

of various growth about the place. The song-thrush, too, is scarce. In some parts of France, Switzerland, and Italy, I have observed the blackbird to be common.

THE RING-OUZEL.

Rock or Mountain Blackbird. Rock Starling.

Turdus torquatus, Linn.

Is found during summer in suitable localities over the island.

From the south to the north of Ireland the ring-ouzel is a summer inhabitant of certain haunts, which wholly differ in their character from those frequented by the other British thrushes, and render it little known except to the student of nature, or to the visitor of the wild and rocky mountain scenery.* To my ear its call-note is extremely pleasing, from association in the mind with the free spirit of nature, with localities which own not,—and never will own,—man's dominion. The ring-ouzel is truly a "tenant of the wild." It first became familiar to me in the glens or ravines cleft in the range of mountains lying westward of Belfast, every one of which, that displayed wild romantic beauty in an eminent degree, boasted its pair or more of these birds, whose haunts were always where the cliffs or banks were loftiest, and where the cascade formed a picturesque accompaniment to the scene. Within the distance of five or six miles were as many of these localities thus resorted to, and where only, throughout the district, the birds were to be found, except at the periods of their migratory movements. When walking in the Crow Glen, one of these haunts, on a summer evening in 1829, with my pointer dog

* When observing the two other fine species of European rock-thrush—*Turdus saxatilis* and *T. cyaneus*—about the Alps of Switzerland and Italy, the former of which was particularly conspicuous in the wild rocky defiles of the Rhigi, I could not but wish that, like the ring-ouzel, they also were visitants to Ireland. Two individuals of the *T. saxatilis* have of late years been obtained in England. See Yarr. Brit. Birds. Supp. to 1st edit. and 2nd edit.

some paces in advance, it was amusing to see two ring-ouzels pursuing him, and approaching so near as to strike the air violently within a few inches of his head; their loudest cries being at the same time uttered. Many an earnest and expressive look the dog gave towards me, as if desirous of advice in his extremity, but finding it in vain, he at length ran up to me, when the birds, nothing daunted, followed, and gave myself as well as two friends who were with me, the same salute, flying so near that we could almost have struck them with our hands. At the beginning of the onset, a female bird appeared, as if inciting the males forward, and continued until they attained the highest pitch of violence, when like another heroine, she retired to a commanding eminence to be "spectatress of the fight." Had these birds been a pair protecting their young, or assuming similar artifice to the lapwing in withdrawing attention from its nest, (in which the ring-ouzel is said to be an adept,) the circumstance would be unworthy of notice, but the assailants were both male birds in adult plumage. The chase of the dog was continued a considerable way down the glen, and for about fifteen or twenty minutes. There were two or three pair there in that season, and one of their nests containing four eggs was discovered; it was artfully placed beneath an overhanging bank, whose mosses, growing naturally, concealed those of which the nest was composed from ordinary view. The usual building site is on the ground, and generally on the side either of the shelving or precipitous banks of our mountain-streams.

Throughout Ireland in similar localities to those already noticed, we have met with the ring-ouzel from April to October, as in "The Glens," Glenariff, &c., about Cushendall in Antrim; about Rosheen mountain, and Lough Salt in Donegal; at the head of the ravine between Sleive Donard,—the loftiest of the mountains of Mourne in Down, rising nearly three thousand feet above the sea, which washes its base,—and the mountains to its north-west; on the heights of Carlingford mountain in Louth, where the beautiful flowers of the rare *Rhodiola rosea* at the same time met the eye; about Achil Head, one of the most westerly points of Mayo; and on the high rocky hills

of Clare. Its presence is generally announced to us by its chatter at some distance excited by our approach; but, restless as a blackbird, the ring-ouzel flits from rock to rock, often leaving the eye wandering long ere it can fix upon the sought-for object. It breeds about the mountains of Dublin and Wicklow,* and is stated to appear there in flocks in spring and autumn;† at the latter season, to eat the berries of the mountain ash (*Pyrus aucuparia*). It is said to frequent the hills about Portumna, on the western border of Galway; and Mr. M'Calla, states that a few breed in the least frequented parts of the mountains of Connemara, where he has often searched in vain for their nests, though satisfied that they were near:—on leaving their supposed vicinity the old birds followed him to a considerable distance, uttering their mournful notes. They are plentiful in the autumn evidently from migration, although never seen in flocks in spring, and are called *round-berry birds* in that district, from the circumstance of their feeding on the berries of the rowan or mountain ash. Ring-ouzels frequent the mountain tops—Slievna-mon, &c.,—about Clonmel (Tipperary), where the country people call them *cow-boys*,‡ and a few have been met with in summer among the Comeragh mountains, county of Waterford.§ This species is mentioned in the Fauna of Cork as a summer visitant to the mountainous districts; and is common at that season in the most rocky parts of the mountains of Kerry, within a few miles of the sea-coast, in the same haunts with choughs and eagles.‖

More than a family of these birds together have not come under my own observation in the north-east of this island, but they have been reported to me as once seen in considerable numbers in autumn on Sleive Donard, and the bleak mountain above Sea-Forde

* Mr. R. Ball.

† In White's "Natural History of Selborne," this species is mentioned as merely visiting that locality in spring and autumn, when on its way to the north and south. According to his observation during three springs and two autumns, it is most punctual in its appearance. It has been noticed as visiting Devonshire and Cornwall in a similar manner.

‡ Mr. Davis. § Mr. Poole. ‖ Mr. T. F. Neligan.

in Down. Ring-ouzels appeared in numbers like fieldfares and redwings among the Mounterlowney mountains, Tyrone, to sporting friends, grouse-shooting there in the last week of August, in the years 1817 and 1818. Their resort was to some rowan-trees near a shieling at the extremity of a glen, where six or seven have been killed at a shot as they were feeding on the berries. They were the most common birds in that wild locality, and suffered much in consequence, being in daily requisition as food for trained peregrine falcons.

I have rarely been in the haunts of the ring-ouzel about the time of its arrival or departure. The earliest date at which it happened to come under my notice about Belfast, was the 17th of April,* and the latest the middle of October: in a bird killed at the latter period, I found a quantity of the larvæ of insects of several kinds. This species has occasionally been met with in Ireland during winter.

About Aberarder, Inverness-shire, an observant friend met with ring-ouzels in small flocks from the 10th of August to the 26th f September, 1838, on which latter day not less than twenty were seen: he considers them to feed chiefly on the "heath-berries" (which were observed in their mutings) and berries of the juniper. In other years they were stated to be common until the period of his departure from that district in the middle of October. When there myself during September, 1842, these birds were occasionally seen among junipers,—of which there is quite a tract in Glen Marson,—and rowan-trees, both laden with berries. The greatest number were seen on the 26th of that month, on which day a few came under my own observation. One of my friends, whose beat was in another and wilder district, reported them to be in con-

* An ornithological friend under whose notice this species first came on the 30th of April, 1848, when he saw four in company at one of the ravines of the Black Mountain here, remarked, that he should have passed them by as blackbirds, but for perceiving them to alight on the tops of whins and other plants:—a good observation as their alighting on the tops of rocks, stones, plants, &c., is a striking characteristic. On the 7th of April, 1846, several were seen by Lord Roden's gamekeeper on the mountains above Tollymore Park.

siderable numbers ;—flying out of the rowan-trees in flocks. The remark of Sir Wm. Jardine that this species "is no where abundant, and is generally seen in pairs about some solitary glen or ravine, or by some shelving cliff," (B. B. vol. ii. p. 99.) would appear to be only referable in Scotland to certain districts, or to the breeding season.

M. Duval-Jouve informs us that :—"The ring-ouzel is always seen (in Provence) early in the spring. It has been observed towards the end of February; on one occasion it was seen as late as the 15th of April. The cold of November brings it back to us regularly. None remain with us during winter, not even on the shores of the Mediterranean, or in the neighbouring islands; so that among all the birds of this tribe, which are sent from Corsica every winter to Toulon and Marseilles, by thousands, we do not find one ring-ouzel before the end of February." Zoologist for Oct., 1845, p. 1119.

THE GOLD-VENTED THRUSH.

Turdus aurigaster, Vieillot.
—— *chrysorhæus*, Temm.
Hæmatornis, „ Swains.

Has once been killed in Ireland.

By the kindness of Dr. Burkitt of Waterford, who possesses a collection of native birds, (or species killed in Ireland,) I exhibited an individual of this African thrush to the Natural History section of the British Association, held at Cork in 1843. It was purchased by that gentleman from a country-lad who brought it into Waterford in January, 1838, with a number of blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) and snipes, and who believed it to be a hen blackbird : he shot it at Mount Beresford, three miles and a half from Waterford. There can therefore be no doubt of the specimen having been killed in this country. It is the only individual known to have occurred in Europe. Le Vaillant described

the species in his Birds of Africa, vol. iii. p. 46. pl. 107 (Paris 1802), under the name of *Le Cudor*, stating that it was discovered on the banks of the Groot-vis, a river of the Caffre country: little more is yet known respecting it. A figure, taken from the specimen here noticed, has appeared in the 2nd edition of Yarrell's British Birds, and in the Supplementary part to the 1st edition of the same work.

Mr. R. Ball of Dublin informed me in October, 1845, that three birds of a very nearly allied species, brought from Palestine —and called *Palestine Nightingales*—had been obtained for the aviary of the Zoological Garden, Phœnix Park. They were more of a slate-colour than the species under consideration.

GOLDEN ORIOLE.

Oriolus galbula, Linn.

This beautiful species—unlike a native of our clime—is but an occasional summer visitant.

A bird described to Mr. R. Ball to have been the size of a thrush, and in colour, bright-yellow and black, frequented a garden between Middleton and Castlemartyr (county of Cork),* for some months in the summer of 1817 (?): he had no doubt of its having been a golden oriole. In the 1st volume of the Zoological Journal (p. 590), one of these birds stated to have been shot in the county of Wexford, in May, 1823, is said to be preserved in the Museum of the Royal Dublin Society. In the Fauna of Cork (1845), we are told that "one was sent to the Institution in 1823 by Lord Bantry:" this is, I presume, the same individual that Mr. Richard Dowden told me in 1838, had been sent some years before that period to the Institution alluded to. It came under his notice in a fresh state; and had been shot at Lord Bantry's seat, near the town of Bantry, in the county of Cork. On the 11th of May, 1824, a female of this species was shot by a gentleman of my acquaintance near Donaghadee, in the county

* This is the specimen alluded to in the Fauna of Cork as from Castlemartyr.

of Down, and sent to Mr. John Montgomery of Belfast, who added it to his collection: a male bird was soon afterwards seen about the same place.* Dr. Burkitt of Waterford mentions a golden oriole as having been shot at Ballinamona, two miles from that city, in 1824 or 1825. I have been credibly informed that one was procured near Arklow, county of Wicklow, in the summer of 1827 (?). In a letter from Dr. Robert Graves of Dublin to a mutual friend in Belfast, dated November, 1830, it is mentioned, that a male golden oriole was shot in the preceding summer in a valley above one of the bays of Kerry. In January 1838, I was informed of one having been shot near Gorey, county of Wexford, about a year before that time—probably in the summer of 1837; as in that year a male bird, accompanied by a female which escaped, was shot on a cherry tree in a garden at Ballintore near Ferns :† it has not been positively stated whether more than the same individual be included in these two records. In Dr. Burkitt's collection there is a male bird which was procured in June, 1838, near Woodstown, county of Waterford. In the same year (?) one was for some time a visitant at Cahirmore, near Roxborough, co. Cork.‡

Mr. Yarrell mentions two individuals as obtained in England in the month of April, 1824, in which year one or two were procured in Ireland. The other years of their occurrence in England mentioned by this author—1811, 1829, 1833—are different from those in which they were met with in Ireland. The species is about equally rare in England and in this island. In Scotland,—according to Macgillivray, B. B. vol. ii. p. 76. (1839),—there is no authentic record of its occurrence. The birds mentioned by Mr. Selby as in the Museum of the University, Edinburgh, and said to have been killed on the Pentland Hills, are known to Mr. Macgillivray to have been brought from France.

In the summer and autumn of 1826, I met with the golden oriole near Rotterdam, in Holland; in the finely wooded valley

* These are the individuals alluded to by Mr. Templeton in Charlesworth's Magazine of Natural History, vol. i. p. 405.

† Poole. ‡ Ball.

near Stanz, in Switzerland; in different parts of Italy; and in the royal garden at the palace of Fontainebleau, in France, where on the 30th of August, a whole family of them appeared at once, and their fine bright colours were in admirable keeping with the lovely flowers around. When sailing in H. M. S. Beacon, from Malta to the Morea, in April, 1841, a female bird of this species flew on board on the 25th, when we were about 60 miles from Calabria,—the nearest land—and 135 from Mount Etna: on the 27th two other females alighted on the rigging and were captured; we were then 45 miles from Zante (the nearest land), and 60 from the Morea.

THE HEDGE-SPARROW.

Hedge-Warbler or Accentor.

Dunnock.

Accentor modularis, Cuv.
Motacilla „ Linn.

Is distributed over the island in suitable localities.

A favourite haunt of this bird, so plain in plumage and unobtrusive in its habits, is the base of thick white-thorn hedges, where we are often amused on perceiving it thread its way, evidently as happy and contented as if no obstacles were opposed to its progress: we may often too, see it come quietly stealing out of heaps of pea-rods piled up in the outskirts of the garden, where its early nest (sometimes built in the first week of April,) with the beautiful bluish-green eggs, so much prized by juvenile depredators, will not unfrequently be found.* A nest which came under my observation was formed exteriorly of grass and mosses (*Hypna*): and with the exception of a small tuft of hair, was lined entirely with the latter, some of the graceful urn-shaped capsules of which, rich-brown in hue, most picturesquely nodded over the four beautiful bluish-green eggs. This bird is not confined to the country,

* Since this was written, remarks on the species to the same effect, but fuller and better, have been published by Sir. Wm. Jardine, Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 187. Mr. Macgillivray too, gives an excellent account of its habits, vol. ii. p. 251; and it is very agrecably treated of in the Journal of a Naturalist, p. 148.

but also takes up its abode in the plantations about the squares, &c., in towns. From a narrow skirting of shrubbery before our house in Belfast, I frequently hear the song in its season, and occasionally do so in bright days during winter. It has always seemed to me one of the most peaceable of birds, but that it can be moved to enmity, I have the testimony of a relative, who, at Fort William, near Belfast, once witnessed a fight between two of them, in which one was killed. The victor, after having slain his antagonist, twice or thrice uttered a song of triumph, at the finale of which he each time flew at and again struck his victim. A friend, who has kept this bird caged, remarks: that when placed near any other species it imitates its notes, and when near several, imitates them all, making a strange medley. The following communication by Mr. Poole reminds me of an interesting habit of this species:—"March the 3rd. At this season the dunnock displays some curious evolutions, probably by way of exhibiting its gallantry—suddenly raising the wings from the body, and holding them for a moment at right angles with it, and then repeatedly flapping them with an attractive and languishing air. It also floats in the air in a manner quite foreign to its usual habit. One whose nest I was examining, when frightened off, evidenced great distress, and even simulated being wounded, as is the custom of many, indeed of most species of birds with which I am acquainted." The hedge-sparrow (as it is called in the north) is known in the south of Ireland by the name of *wren's-man*,* perhaps on account of its frequenting hedges like the wren, along with which it often falls a sacrifice to the "wren-boys" on St. Stephen's, or Christmas day. The wren being in the estimation of these worthies (see account of that species) the *greater* bird of the two, we can understand why the other should be called wren's-*man*. *Reefogue* is the name applied to it in Wexford.†

Mr. R. Davis, in February, 1838, kindly sent from Clonmel for my inspection a specimen of the hedge-sparrow, the upper

* Mr. R. Ball.

† Mr. Poole. "Riabhog (pronounced reefogue) signifies in Irish, brownish-grey bird."—Mr. R. S. M'Adam.

plumage of which was entirely of a cream-colour of one shade, and the under plumage of a paler hue. It had for a long time frequented nursery grounds near Clonmel, where some dozen shots were from time to time fired at it;—a penalty for showing false colours. As correctly remarked by Mr. Macgillivray, accidental varieties of this species are extremely rare. The bill and legs of the hedge-accentor are occasionally in this country, as well as elsewhere, covered with large excrescences, like those described in the Magazine of Natural History, vol. vi. p. 154, and by the author last named, p. 256. The stomach of one examined in January, contained the seeds of vetches and fragments of stone.

The Alpine Accentor (*Accentor alpinus*) has, in a very few instances, been taken in England, but not as yet in Scotland or Ireland. I have commonly met with it in the months of June and July, on the perpetual snow of the lofty Alps of Switzerland, as towards the summit of Mount St. Gothard, the Grimsel, Col de Four, &c.; single birds, or a couple near to each other, but not in company, generally appeared.

THE REDBREAST.

Robin.

Erythaca rubecula, Linn. (sp.)
Motacilla „ „
Sylvia „ Lath.

Is very common, and is resident.

Well known as are its habits, a few notes illustrative of them, as observed in the neighbourhood of Belfast may be selected; and first, with regard to its *familiarity*. In the very mild winter of 1831–32 a redbreast very frequently joined a friend and his lady residing at Milltown in the Falls, at breakfast; without invitation it ate of the bread and butter on the table, and when not so employed, made itself quite at home by perching on the toasting-fork at the fire. In summer it built in one of the out-houses, and visited the kitchen daily; its song was in August poured forth in the hall. In this house, also, a redbreast once built its

nest in the fold of a bed-curtain in an occupied chamber. Its absence being preferred to its presence there, the room window was closed against the intruder, in consequence of which the first egg was laid outside on the bare window-sill. This circumstance caused pity for the bird, the window was re-opened, and the egg placed in the nest, where the usual number was duly deposited and incubated. One young bird only was produced, which was overfed to such a degree that it grew to a most unnatural size, but did not long survive, falling a victim probably to too good living. Butter is so great a dainty to these birds, that in a friend's house, frequented during the winter by one or two of them, the servant was obliged to be very careful in keeping what was in her charge covered, to save it from destruction: if unprotected, it was certain to be eaten. I have known them to visit labourers at breakfast hour to eat butter from their hands,* and enter a lantern to feast on the candle. One, as I have been assured, was in the constant habit of entering a house in a tan-yard in Belfast by the window, that it might feed upon tallow, when the men were using this substance in the preparation of the hides. But even further than this, I have seen the redbreast exhibit its partiality for scraps of fat, &c. Being present one day in December, 1837, when the golden eagle described at page 3 was fed, a robin, to my surprise, took the eagle's place on the perch the moment that he descended from it to the ground to eat some food given him, and when there, picked off some little fragments of fat, or scraps of flesh; this done, it quite unconcernedly alighted on the chain by which the "rapacious" bird was fastened.† I at the same time learned that this robin regularly visited the eagle's abode at feeding-time, though as yet there was

* Robins and other small birds seem to have a good idea of time, as evinced by their coming to particular spots at the period of the day when food is given to them. This species in particular I have known to come to the window-sill just at the breakfast hour, when a few crumbs were given it, and not at any other hour throughout the day.

† Although this robin escaped the golden eagle unscathed, as much cannot be said for one which occasionally entered the kitchen at the Falls and sang there: having one day alighted on a cage in which a toucan was kept, this bird with its huge bill seized and killed it.

no severity of weather. With respect to other food of an unusual kind, it may be mentioned, that a plant of the *Fuchsia tenella* in the "Falls" greenhouse was entirely deprived of its seed by robins; that in a friend's garden, in the summer of 1838, some young birds of the year were captured in the nets suspended over the cherry-trees, when in search of the protected fruit, and others were often seen partaking freely of the cherries. The stomachs of two killed in the month of January for the purpose of being stuffed, having been sent to me, were found to contain in addition to gravel, the remains of insects only. One was filled with Coleoptera, the other with various insect food. Robins are such favourites * as scarcely ever to be shot in Ireland.

The *song* of the robin is heard with us throughout the year, except at the moulting period. Even in dull and rainy winter mornings, when all other birds are silent, this favourite species may sometimes be heard as soon as twilight commences, and long before the sun is up. It will hold forth, too, in the autumnal and winter afternoons, until darkness sets in. Its song was once heard at the Falls in a moonlight night, as it has been on different occasions by moonlight in the county of Wexford.† I have more than once in Belfast listened to the commencement of its song in the first week of June, at a quarter before three o'clock. So soon after the breeding season as the end of July, its song has been renewed at Wolf-hill, and on the 6th of August, several had in one year recommenced their strains. Fine autumnal mornings succeeding wet nights, are the favourite time for the harmony of this and many other birds. I have seen and heard about a dozen of redbreasts perched on the fruit trees in our garden, and about twenty-five to thirty yards distant from each other, singing at the same time. So many of them sending forth

* *November* 23, 1847. Taking shelter to day from a heavy shower in a cottage at the side of the river Lagan, near Belfast, a robin came to the door, picked crumbs, and flew away. The mistress of the cottage remarked that as winter advanced it would take up its abode in the house altogether, as it had done for the last four or five winters. But what pleased me, (and induced this note to be made) was, that lest the robin should be disturbed, no cat had as formerly been kept in the house, since the bird established itself as a winter inmate.

† Poole.

at one time satisfies me that the young birds of the year bear their part in the concert, and the fact of every individual in view trilling forth its notes, favours the idea that the female bird is possessed of song. When the ground has been covered with snow, of more than a week's continuance at mid-winter, and the sun did not break forth all day, I have heard several singing, and answering each other as at a more genial season :—a wild bird, too, has been observed to wash, at such a time as in summer. All this would indicate a seeming indifference to cold, of which we, however, know these birds to be very susceptible, leaving as they do various continental countries, on the approach of winter, and betaking themselves to milder climates. In snares, set for small birds during frost, I have remarked that redbreasts were generally the first victims. Their extreme tameness before a fall of snow, unerringly shows their sensibility to the coming change, and in several instances has led me to prognosticate it with certainty, when no other indication was perceptible.

That a single redbreast, or a pair of these birds, has generally a particular beat or range I have had abundant evidence, (vide Dovaston in Loudon's Mag. Nat. Hist. vol. vi. p. 3,) as I have also had, that they very frequently keep within it as spring advances, instead of retiring to the thickest woods to build, as stated by many authors. In towns, they have been known to me as frequenting a certain quarter throughout the year. For two years this occurred in our own office-houses, and in each season two broods were reared. In one instance the nest was placed on the top of a wall supporting the roof of the gateway, and in the other, on the part of the side-wall of a three-story building, the only approach to it being through small apertures, about two inches in diameter, cut in trap-doors on the first and second floors to admit the rope attached to a pulley. Perched on the neighbouring buildings, these birds gave forth their song, and for about the latter half of the month of October, 1831, when the days were very fine and bright, one regularly frequented the stable, and, when perched upon the stalls, sang without being in any degree disturbed by the general business of the place going forward, even

within two or three feet of his station. A pair of redbreasts that were assiduously watched during their nidification in the conservatory attached to the town-house of an acquaintance, were one morning found in great consternation, in consequence of their nest having been taken possession of by a bat, which they eventually compelled to change its quarters. The number of eggs is not uncommonly five; rarely more.

Four rather singular instances of the redbreast *building* within doors near Belfast in the summer of 1833 here follow. In all of them, shrubberies and plantations were quite near to the chosen sites. The first two, communicated by a relative, occurred at Wolf-hill. He observes:—"The two nests of a robin in the carpenter's loft are placed on the corner of the wall supporting the roof; the foundation that serves for both nests, is a quantity of large wood-shavings, of which the sides of the nests are likewise formed, together with green moss, beech leaves, wool, tufts of cow-hair, &c., but they are lined with horse-hair only. The mass of materials of which these two nests are made, is about a foot and a half in length, eight inches in breadth, and five inches in thickness. In wet days the male bird kept much within the loft, and sang there. The carpenter tells me that only one of them collected the leaves and shavings: this individual was known from its wanting the tail; it made very free with his pot of grease, and picked from it while in his hand: a brood was reared in one of these nests, but two eggs laid in the other were not incubated. On another occasion the nest was built in the joist-hole of a wall, in course of erection, the completion of which made the removal of the nest unavoidable, and it was placed in an adjoining aperture of the same kind. The parent bird after looking for some time about the spot where the nest had been, rejoined her young, one of which was killed by falling out of its domicile in the course of removal; and here she did not long remain undisturbed, as in the breaking out of a door within a foot of the nest, the mortar and stones fell perilously near her, but she nevertheless did not desert her young."

At Fort William, the seat of a relative, the following circumstance occurred. In a pantry, the window of which was kept open during

the day, one of these birds constructed its nest early in the summer. The place selected was the corner of a moderately high shelf among pickle bottles, which being four-sided, gave the nest the singular appearance of a perfect square. It was made of green moss, and lined with a little black hair; on the one side which was exposed to view, and that only, were dead beech-leaves. When any article near the nest was sought for by the housekeeper, the bird instead of flying out of the window, as might have been expected, alighted on the floor, and waited there patiently until the cause of disturbance was over, when it immediately returned to its nest. Five eggs were laid, which, after having been incubated without success for the long period of about five weeks, were forsaken. The room above this pantry was occupied as a bird-stuffing apartment; after the redbreast had deserted the lower story, a bird of this species,—doubtless the same individual,—visited it daily, and was as often expelled. My friend finding its expulsion of no avail, for it continued to return, had recourse to a novel and rather comical expedient. Having a short time before received a collection of stuffed Asiatic quadrupeds, he selected the most fierce-looking Carnivora, and placed them at the open window, which they nearly filled up, hoping that their formidable aspect, might deter the bird from future ingress. It was not, however, to be so frighted "from its propriety," but made its *entrée* as usual. The walls of the room, the tables in it, and nearly the entire floor were occupied by these stuffed quadrupeds. The perseverance of the robin was at length rewarded by a free permission to have its own way, when, as if in defiance of the *ruse* that was practised against it, the place chosen for the nest was the head of a shark, which hung on the wall, (the mouth being gagged may have prevented its being the site); while the tail, &c., of an "alligator stuff'd" served to screen it from observation. During the operation of forming this nest, the redbreast did not in the least regard the presence of my friend: but both man and bird worked away within a few feet of each other. On the 1st of June I saw it seated on the eggs, which were five in number: they were all productive, and the whole brood in due time escaped in safety.

Two ladies at Larne, believing that a robin, which they fed at the window-sill, was disposed to nidify, placed a box within the porch of their house, for its accommodation. The kind act was at once understood and appreciated by the bird, which built its nest, and reared its brood in the box. The ladies so far assisted in providing building materials, as to pull hairs out of an old chair cover; the robin flew regularly for these, and with them the nest was wholly lined. That the noisy operations of the ship-builder will not prevent the selection of a place for nidification, in his immediate vicinity was shown by a circumstance which came under my own observation. On May 13th, 1836, I saw a redbreast's nest, containing young, in a small round aperture apparently where a knot had been in one of the timbers of the ship "Dunlop," then under repair in the dry dock at Belfast. It was built inside the vessel about three yards from the top of the timbers, (the deck being off,) and at the time of its construction, the deafening process of driving in the *tree-nails* was carried forward occasionally close to the nest. An observant friend, discovering a redbreast's nest, remarked the apparent stupidity of the bird, which having been lifted off the eggs and laid on his open hand, sought not, and indeed seemed to want the power, to escape. He placed it in the nest again, and returning the next day found the young brood out. The appearance of the bird on the previous day, it was now presumed, had been caused by its intentness on the last stage of incubation. I have seen young robins flying about Belfast on the 12th of May. In the very early spring of 1846, a nest with eggs was discovered in the vicinity of that town, on the 20th of February.

A note of February 18th, 1838, reminds me that a young robin of the year, which was caught late in the preceding autumn, and kept for some time in a large cage at the Falls, in company with other birds, made its escape, but, on the appearance of snow, two months afterwards, returned, when it gladly renewed its acquaintance with the lady of the house, and a servant, both of whom had been in the habit of feeding it,—the bird at once markedly exhibited its former partiality towards them, in preference to the other

inmates of the house. It sang in a low tone, and never burst forth into full song but once,—"a song of triumph,"—just after it had nearly killed a blue tit-mouse, its companion in captivity.

Well known as is the *pugnacity* of robins, one or two instances may be given. Their being so wholly absorbed during combat as to be regardless of all else, was ludicrously evinced at Springvale, by a pair fighting from the air downwards to the earth, until they disappeared in a man's hat, that happened to be lying on the ground, and in which they were both captured. On one occasion two of these birds caught fighting in a yard in Belfast were kept all night in separate cages. One was given its liberty early in the morning, and the other being tamer—possibly from having been the better beaten of the two—was kept with the intention of being permanently retained. So unhappy, however, did the prisoner look, that it too was set at liberty in the yard, which was believed to be its chosen domicile. The other came a second time, and attacked it, when my informant who was present, hastened to the rescue, and the wilder bird flew away. The tamer one was again caught, and brought into the house for safety. The intruder was now driven out of the premises, and in the evening, when it was expected that he was in a different locality, the other bird was turned out; its wicked and pertinacious antagonist, however, still lay in wait, a third time attacked, and then killed it:—the tame bird, though the inferior of the other in strength, always "joined issue" with it, and fought to the best of its poor ability. Some years ago, at Merville (co. Antrim), a robin kept possession of the green-house, and killed every intruder of its own species, amounting to about two dozen, that entered the house. This had been so frequently done, that my informant became curious to know the means resorted to for the purpose; and on examination of two or three of the victims, he found a deep wound in the neck of each, evidently made by the bill of the slayer. The lady of the house hearing of the bird's cruelty, had the sharp point of its beak cut off, and no more of its brethren were afterwards slaughtered; but it did not itself long survive this slight

mutilation. The following came under my own observation at Wolf-hill :—two robins fighting most wickedly in the air alighted to take breath ;—having recovered a little, and approached within a foot of each other ready to recommence the charge, a duck that had witnessed the combat quickly waddled up, and in the most gentle and pacific manner shoved with its bill the one to the right and the other to the left, thus evidently separating them to prevent a renewal of the conflict. Having alluded to their evil propensities, the following note must be introduced. Mr. Poole having a slate-trap once set for birds, saw, on going up to it, a robin perched outside. On opening the trap, one of these birds was found within. It was carried off, and the other with amiable intent followed the captor of its companion (as it was presumed) even into the house.

The robin is not subject to much *variety in plumage*, but fawn-coloured specimens have occasionally come under my notice in Ireland. In the Belfast Museum, there is one having the whole upper plumage a very light fawn-colour; the quills and larger feathers of the wings, whitish: the red breast is retained. The tarsi and toes, as may be anticipated from the tendency of the plumage towards albinism, are much lighter coloured than usual. A relative, who has attended particularly to the changes of plumage in birds, has noticed in a particular year, that scarcely an adult robin had his breast of a bright red, at the beginning of July; and that on the 29th of the month, the first was seen in full adult garb.

Dr. J. D. Marshall states that the species is very rarely met with in the island of Rathlin, off the northern coast of Antrim. Mr. Macgillivray remarks, that it is "found in all parts of England and Scotland" (vol. ii. p. 270.) During the three months of August, September, and October, spent by friends at Aberarder, Inverness-shire, in each of the five years, from 1838 to 1842, inclusive, one robin only appeared, and this was seen by myself on the 4th of Sept., 1842. There is abundance of wood in the district, but it alone is not a sufficient attraction to the familiar bird.

The robin has not uncommonly come under my notice in summer in Holland and Switzerland.

For the following biography, I am indebted to a lady residing at Hazelbank, (co. Antrim):—

In the autumn of 1844, we first became intimate with our little friends (the robins), about whom you inquire. They attended all our gardening operations, picking up worms as they appeared, and although they seemed to prefer small ones, yet I was often amazed at their enormous swallow, for they would attack monstrous creatures, knocking them about with their bills until they were totally disabled, then gulping them down whole or in very large pieces. As it was very rare for more than a single bird to attend us at a time, we thought at first that there was only one who particularly sought our society; however, upon further acquaintance, we discovered we had three constant companions, and were delighted when we found that each had its own little peculiarity of plumage, of movement, and even of *expression of countenance*, which enabled us to identify them, when near, almost at a glance. As a matter of course we gave them different appellations; one with a slight elevation of feather on the top of his head we named Cresty; the second we called Terry, from meeting him generally at the seat on the terrace walk; the third, having eyes much larger than either of the other two, was, in consequence, designated Big-eye. Cresty is much the handsomest bird, having a most brilliant bosom and a fine glossy coat, with a quick startling movement and a fiery eye. Terry's breast is of a paler red, with a rounded soft cosey little figure, gentle in his movements, and confiding and affectionate in his manner. The plumage of Big-eye is all over of a darker hue; the movement more stealthy, and the manner extremely timid. To induce a greater intimacy, we placed crumbs of bread on the sun-dial at the terrace seat, and our dear little Terry would pick them up, and gradually come so near, hopping about our feet, that I put some on a bit of slate and held it in my hand, in order to tempt him still nearer: after a little hesitation he alighted on it for an instant, and flew off with a crumb: by degrees he gained more courage and remained longer; I then tried him with my hand, which he seemed to prefer, and took delight in picking the crumbs from the hollow between the fingers, but he looked with great suspicion at my *thumb* which I could, with difficulty, train to be quite still. In a short time he became more familiar, and seemed to watch our approach, for he frequently met us on the little walk leading from the house, and when we did not attend to him, he would come dashing past, striking my bonnet violently with his wing, or fluttering in my face; he would sometimes sit upon a twig, and as if hold a conversation with me, for he would be quite silent while I talked to him, and so soon as I paused, he began a little soft and sweet muttering in his throat, as if in reply, which he would cease, the moment I again spoke. When we found him absent, and called, Terry! Terry! he was soon at our side: and his hearing must be very acute, for I have seen him flying towards us from a very great distance. To give an idea of his extreme composure and satisfaction while sitting on the hand, he has more than once, after feeding, tucked up one of his little feet under his feathers (as we often see barn-door fowls do,) and roosting

on a finger, deliberately prepare himself for sleep: which on one occasion he indulged in so long, as to completely weary his perch. He would eat off my lap, hop about there without any concern, pick at my shawl, and then look up in my face and begin his little song, or prattle; occasionally he became quite coquettish, disregarding my call, while sitting on a high branch and only descending at his leisure, with a dignified hop—hop, from twig to twig, as if quite aware of how much I was his humble servant. Finding that neither Cresty, nor Big-eye, visited the terrace, but that we always found them waiting for us, either in the garden, or in the melon-pit enclosure, we began to suspect there was some appropriation of landed property amongst the birds, and were soon convinced of the fact, by witnessing grievous battles between our two favourites, Terry and Cresty, the former attacking the latter if he appeared within a certain distance of the terrace, and the latter seizing Terry, if he made any movement towards the melon-pit. It would have been amusing, had it not been distressing, to view these beauteous little creatures, who seemed only formed for harmony and love, bristling up with rage, every feather like "quills upon the fretful porcupine," eyes on fire, and their tiny *heads making circles* of defiance before the final collision, which always terminated by our separating the combatants, who retreated severally to their respective districts,—so fierce have they been that they have fought even upon our hands. Terry, though by far the mildest and quietest creature in times of peace, was the most daring and determined in war: he seemed also to have more respect for the rights of property, for Cresty was generally the intruder upon his neighbour.

We often marvelled, that we had never seen the slightest quarrel take place between Cresty and Big-eye, though we had often perceived frequent trespassing upon what we deemed Cresty's peculiar domain; the riddle was solved however, in spring, when one day the latter gentleman made himself very busy by snatching a crumb from us at repeated intervals, which he would eagerly carry to a neighbouring hedge. On examining the premises, we saw Mrs. Big-eye, snugly ensconced in her bower, and her gallant Cresty, playing the kind little husband by bringing her food, which she opened her mouth with much satisfaction to receive. Afterwards we watched them both go down to the bank next the sea, which proved to be the spot selected for their nest. And in process of time (the lady having disappeared altogether), Cresty would carry large cargoes of food to *madame* and the chicks. Often about this period have we seen both him and Terry, (with green caterpillars caught in their bills, and writhing round their heads like so many small serpents,) hop on our hands, and add to their burthen eight or nine bits of oaten cake, and thus, with bills well packed, fly to their nest. Cresty never was, at any time, so familiar with us as Terry; *his* habit was to flutter round the hand for a moment, pick a crumb, and away: but he would occasionally rest for a minute or so, then sit on a flower-pot, or twig, and talk to us. Big-eye never came near us but in the absence of Cresty, and then only to about the distance of half a yard, where she fed quietly and securely on the crumbs we threw down to her,—and when this pair brought their young ones abroad, they kept close to the hedge and seemed to inherit the shyness of their parents. But not so, the progeny of our sweet Terry, who were careless and confiding; *their* mother never came near us, and we have sad reason to believe that she met with some untoward

fate,—as Terry came to us one day all dripping wet, his plumage disordered and half plucked off,—he had a most melancholy countenance, and with drooping wing, sat uttering faint, doleful little cries—we feared his nest (which was in the river bank,) had been robbed, or swept away by the recent floods: he refused to take any food during the whole day, looking piteously in our face for sympathy,—on the next, he seemed to have revived in some degree, he rushed eagerly to the crumbs, filled his bill full, and flew off,—he returned in the same agitated manner several times; and every day, for a long period, he continued his unceasing exertions, with an anxiety and a deplorable wo-be-gone look, so unlike his former gay little self, that we were quite grieved for him. Gradually he recovered his looks, and when the brood were fledged he brought them to the terrace, and with the joy of a happy father, displayed his treasures, and fed them without fear, before our eyes. They became very familiar, hopping round our feet, so that we hoped they would become as tame as papa, but he evidently had no such wish, for he watched them attentively, and the moment he perceived them approach too closely, he darted amongst them with a great flutter and scattered them to a proper distance,—he was so much on the alert, that we never succeeded in attracting any of them, and they disappeared entirely during the summer.*

The only sources of annoyance our birds had with us, were from the dog and the cat, who occasionally accompanied us in our walks,—of the latter, they were very much afraid, although she was quite amenable to orders, and did not attempt to molest them,—but, strange to say, with the dog they were much better friends, although in defiance of all correction, he would often make a bounce at them, but only in play; Terry seemed to know this, often remaining quietly on my hand, while Rory stood at my side gazing at him,—and we were much amused to watch occasionally, a kind of race between them, as they accompanied us down the avenue to the front gate, a distance of about 250 yards, the dog running before us, and the bird flying from tree to tree during the whole way and back again.

Hazelbank, December 23rd, 1845. I. T. T.

THE REDSTART.

Phœnicura ruticilla, Swains.
Motacilla phœnicurus, Linn.
Sylvia „ Lath.

Can only be noticed as a very rare visitant to Ireland.

This is singular, as it is a regular vernal migrant, not only to England but to Scotland, and is met with "from the borders to

* A similar fact may be mentioned. A young robin which followed a relative through the garden, and eat food from his hand, gave him also its "most sweet company" by perching on his knee or shoulder when he was seated in a garden chair; this degree of familiarity however, was not at all approved of by an old bird, most probably its parent, which several times rushed quickly past and drove it away.

the extreme north"* of the latter country. Nowhere are there districts apparently better suited to this very handsome and interesting bird than in Ireland. Its absence as a summer visitor to our isle I have always regretted, when meeting with it in localities of various character in England; as about the Great Park at Windsor; the trim and old fashioned grounds at Hampton Court; the rich and wooded districts of Norfolk; the picturesque Matlock, in Derbyshire; and amid the stern grandeur of the scenery about Langdale Pikes, in Westmoreland. My information on the species as Irish, simply is, that a specimen was shot many years ago in the autumn, in the neighbourhood of Belfast, and when recent was obtained by Dr. J. D. Marshall; it proved to be *P. ruticilla*, when compared with English specimens in his collection: it has unfortunately been destroyed by moths. The same gentleman procured a fresh specimen which was killed near Dublin, in December, 1828. In the collection of T. W. Warren, Esq., of that city, I have seen one of these birds which was shot about the year 1830, near Kingstown. I have heard of another being killed near Dublin, and one at Tanderagee, in the county of Armagh. That all these birds were redstarts of some species, there can be no doubt, but whether or not *P. ruticilla* is uncertain.

This species came under my notice in Switzerland; and when proceeding from Malta to the Morea, in 1841, one of them migrating from the south on the 25th of April, alighted on H.M.S. Beacon and was captured: the nearest land was Calabria, distant about 60 miles. Dr. J. L. Drummond informs me, that when H.M.S. Renown (74), of which he was assistant-surgeon, was lying off Gibraltar in spring, redstarts on migration flew on board, some of which were taken.

* Macgillivray, vol. ii. p. 308. Mr. St. John, too, mentions it as a regular summer visitant to Morayshire. "Wild Sports, &c." p. 139.

THE BLACK REDSTART.

Phœnicura tithys, Linn. (sp.)
Motacilla „ „
Sylvia „ Lath.

Has in a few instances been obtained.

The first specimen recorded as met with in Great Britain, was procured near London in October, 1829, since which period a few others have been procured in different parts of the south of England. But so early as the year 1818, Mr. R. Ball saw the species about Youghal; in the autumn of that year and the few following autumns (in four different years), ten altogether were seen. In one season—1818 ?—five were killed: of which, unfortunately, all that now remains is one badly preserved specimen. Since the period alluded to, a redstart was taken in a corn-store at Youghal, and in May, 1837, one was seen in a garden within the town, but whether these also were *P. tithys* cannot now be ascertained.

A black redstart, shot near Wexford, in February, 1836, came into the possession of Dr. Burkitt of Waterford. As a steam-boat was proceeding from Glasgow to Belfast, on the 5th of November, 1841, a female bird flew on board when the vessel was about mid-way between the two ports; the day was remarkably fine and the wind southerly. This bird, which was in excellent condition, came into my possession on the following day:* it was probably migrating from Scotland, but the *P. tithys* has not been noticed there, nor in the north of England.† An adult male in the collection of Mr. R. Davis of Clonmel, was shot on a cliff near Youghal, in January, 1843. Dr. Harvey sent for my inspection from Cork, on the 6th of November, 1845, the wing and tail of one, killed a few days before that date by the Rev. Joseph Stopford, at Castlefreke, near Rosscarberry, in the west of the county of Cork. This bird, as well as that taken in the Glas-

* Jard.; Macgil.; Yarr.

† This is the individual noticed in the preface to Yarrell's Brit. Birds, p. vi. 1st edit. as killed in the north of Ireland.

gow steamer, has the tail tipped with black, which colour prevails particularly on the outer web of the feathers: this is mentioned, as in the descriptions which I have referred to, there is no notice of the black colour. In a continental specimen of *P. Suecica* examined at the same time, the lower half of the tail is black, the upper half red, of the same hue as in the tail of *P. tithys*, and that of other redstarts.

It appears singular, that some of the birds noticed should have been met with so late in the year, indeed, even in winter, but in England they have similarly occurred,—the only individuals there obtained, in connection with which particulars are given, are three in number, and the months of their occurrence, October, December, and January, in different years. The years in which they were taken in England, namely, 1829, 1830, 1833 and 1835, are all different from those in which the specimens were procured in Ireland: this is against the ordinary rule.

In the summer of 1826, I had the pleasure of seeing this species in secluded and rocky pastures of the Rhætian Alps, and at the end of August, met with it in France.

The Blue Throated Redstart (*P. Suecica*), of which six* individuals have been obtained in various parts of England, from north to south, has not occurred in Scotland (Jard.; Macg.), nor in Ireland.

THE STONE-CHAT.

Saxicola rubicola, Linn. (sp.)
Motacilla „ „
Sylvia „ Lath.

Is common, and resident throughout the island.

Waste places producing shrubby plants are its favourite haunts. Around Belfast it equally frequents the old ditch-banks, covered with the sloe, bramble, &c., surrounding the lowest-lying meadows, and the furze (whins), or other cover on the mountain sides.†

* Yarr. Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 254. 2nd edit.

† The name of stone-checker (not stone-chat) is more commonly applied to the wheatear than to this species, in the north of Ireland, where, as well as in some parts of the south, it is called black-cap. Mr. Macgillivray has well observed, that "it does not frequent stony or rocky places," vol. ii. p. 282.

It occasionally appears close to the town. In the north of the county of Antrim, I have remarked it, like the titlark, frequenting the wildest and bleakest localities. It is said, too, to be common in the island of Rathlin.* By the middle of February, its song may be heard; at the end of April, I have seen the female carry food to her young. My friend at Cromac has found its nests in low bushes, and met with several on the ground about the roots of furze, where they were screened from observation by long grass. Mr. Poole remarks it to be an exceedingly wary bird, and that he has sometimes vainly concealed himself behind a thick hedge for a considerable time, with the hope of tracking the parent to its nest, and at length had to give up the attempt in despair. He adds, that the nest is placed towards the lower branches of a furze bush; is composed of dry grass, roots, and wool; that he has seen the eggs on the 30th of April, and once so late as the 12th of July. Its resembling the flycatcher in darting at flies from its perch, and returning to its former station after it has secured them, is noticed by my correspondent. The stomachs of two of these birds sent to me in December and January, were entirely filled with minute coleopterous insects.

Temminck states, that the stone-chat is resident in Africa, but in Europe is a bird of passage: the mild winters of Ireland however, induce it to remain constantly in this island. I have never observed its "arriving or departing at the usual seasons of spring and autumn," as Sir. W. Jardine has done in Scotland, such birds, he remarks, coming "either from the continent, or performing a partial migration from other parts of our own island,"—some, indeed, are said to remain in Scotland during the whole year. This author continues:—"The stone-chat is a species not nearly so abundant as either of the preceding (wheatear and whin-chat),† and frequents localities of a more wild and secluded character: extensive whin-covers, the skirts of muirland districts, or the vicinity of the coast, where whin or brushwood prevail." Brit.

* Dr. J. D. Marshall.

† Mr. Hewitson makes the same remark, without referring to any part of England or Scotland; but probably the north of England is alluded to. Eggs, Brit. Birds, p. 79.

Birds, vol. ii. p. 112. So different is this from what we find in Ireland, that were whin-chat substituted for stone-chat in the extract, it would, with respect to relative numbers and haunts, exactly apply to this island.

In Holland, France, Switzerland, and Italy, this bird has in summer and autumn come under my notice.

THE WHIN-CHAT.

Saxicola rubetra, Linn. (sp.)
Motacilla „ „
Sylvia „ Lath.

Like the wheat-ear, is a regular summer visitant to this country, but is less diffused than that species.

Besides, its places of resort contribute to render the whin-chat still less known than, as a regular bird of passage, it might be. These, about Belfast, are chiefly the base of the mountains and the adjacent fields, or low-lying uncultivated ground, containing shrubby underwood. This bird is described as common in Donegal,* in which county it has come under my own notice. It visits Down, Monaghan, and Armagh, and probably every county throughout the island. It is said to be not uncommon in Connemara;† is believed to visit the neighbourhood of Clonmel;‡ and is included in the Cork Fauna; but noticed as "rare," as it likewise is about Killaloe.§ Mr. Neligan considered this bird to be common in Kerry; remarking that it is very partial to alighting on the dock-weed (*Rumex*) in the meadows, and that the same fields are resorted to every summer.

In white-thorn hedges I have not uncommonly seen the whin-chat, and have remarked it make sallies into the air like the fly-catcher in pursuit of winged prey. The eggs which I have examined, in form, size, and colour, strongly resemble those of the hedge accentor, but on minute inspection are not of their uniform

* J. V. Stewart. † M'Calla. ‡ Davis. § Rev. T. Knox.

bluish-green colour, but faintly speckled with very light brown: they are sometimes six or seven in number. Flies, coleopterous insects, and caterpillars, were the chief food in the stomachs of these birds examined by me.

Mr. Macgillivray observes, that the whin-chat generally arrives about a month later than the wheatear, "and in the south of Scotland seldom makes its appearance before the end of April, while it is stated to arrive in the south of England about the middle of that month," vol. ii. p. 276. Even earlier than this latter period it has been met with about Belfast, but I do not possess sufficient data on which to decide its average arrival. It is considerably later however, than that of the wheatear. The earliest and latest seen by me in the neighbourhood of the town just named, were observed in the same year, 1827, when they appeared on the 3rd of April, and remained until the 1st of October. In 1846, I observed them on the 8th of April, a few days before which they were seen about the mountains of Mourne. At the end of April, 1848, they were met with in the former locality. Sir Wm. Jardine with reference, it may be presumed, to Dumfries-shire, remarks, that this species is more common than the stone-chat,—"in some districts and seasons occurring in immense abundance," Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 110. In no part of Ireland have I seen the whin-chat numerous, and compared with the stone-chat, it is very scarce. Three or four pair in a forenoon's walk are about the most that will be seen at the beginning of the season in the north. In similar numbers as in this latter country, I have observed it in Holland, France, and Italy. One flew on board H.M.S. Beacon, on the 26th of April, 1841, when nearly 90 miles from Zante, and 130 from Navarino: the next day another came to the vessel when about 45 miles from Zante, and 60 from the Morea.

THE WHEATEAR.*

Saxicola œnanthe, Linn. (sp.)
Motacilla „ „
Sylvia „ Lath.

Is a regular summer visitant, commonly distributed over Ireland and the surrounding islets;

Such as the Copelands, off Down; Rathlin, off the north of Antrim;† Tory, off the north-west of Donegal;‡ and when visiting the largest of the islands of Arran, off Galway Bay, on the 8th of July, 1834, it was the only land bird of passage that we met with. Nowhere have I observed this beautiful bird in greater numbers than in the extreme north-west, and along the western coast generally:—with regard to Scotland, it is said to be "nowhere more plentiful, than in the Outer Hebrides, and in the Orkney and Shetland Islands."§ The wheatear is commonly the earliest of the summer birds in arrival, making its appearance usually in the last week of March. The earliest known to me about Belfast, were seen on the 19th of March, 1843, and 24th of March, 1847,—in the late spring of 1837, it did not appear until the 15th of April, nor in that of 1840, until the 29th of this month. Mr. Poole notes its arrival in Wexford on the 26th of March, and Mr. Neligan had not seen it in Kerry before the 25th of this month. About a dozen of wheatears were observed

* In the north of Ireland this bird is commonly called stone-checker, from its note, check—check, and its being generally seen about stones. In Kerry, according to the Rev. T. Knox—as communicated in August, 1838—it is called *custeen-fay-clough*, meaning "the cunning little old man under the stone." Having called the attention of a good Irish scholar, Mr. Robert S. Mc Adam of Belfast, to the name of this bird, he kindly supplied the following note:—"The name for the stone-checker in the north and west of Ireland, is *cloibhrean cloich*. A county Tipperary man questioned, never heard that name for it, nor the county Kerry name either, (which you have,) but says it is called in his county, *casur cloch*, which signifies the *stone-hammer*. The *custeen-fay-clough* is spelled *coistin faoi cloich*, but seems to be a local name for the bird. No one that I have asked had ever heard it."

† Dr. J. D. Marshall.

‡ In August, 1845, Mr. Hyndman saw several here.

§ Macgillivray, Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 292.

together contiguous to the sea, near Belfast, on the 3rd of April, 1836, and as the species is not disposed to congregate with us, it was thought that they had probably come hither in company, and had not long arrived.

Mr. Yarrell mentions their coming from the southward to England about the middle of March, which is also the period named by Mr. Selby as that of their arrival, (it may be presumed,) in Northumberland. But contrary to the habit of other species of migratory birds, it appears that they arrive at an earlier period in Scotland, than in England or Ireland. Sir Wm. Jardine informs us, that they are met with in the pastoral districts in the first week of March, and one was seen by Mr. Macgillivray near Edinburgh, on the 28th of February. The period of their stay in Scotland is not mentioned by these authors. From the district of Aberarder, Inverness-shire, I can state from personal knowledge, that they had generally taken their departure previous to the 1st of September, 1842, as during that month, two individuals only appeared, one on the 16th, and another on the 28th of the month.

From the counties of Down and Antrim, they migrate very early; the mountain pastures, marine sand-hills, and turf bogs, which through the summer have been enlivened by their presence, being often found wholly deserted by the end of August: a few, chiefly single birds, have however, in some places, come under my notice until the first week of October. I have not heard of the occurrence of the species in Ireland during winter, though such might be expected, as White of Selborne tells us, that "in many parts of the south of England" (p. 257, &c. edit. 1837,) wheatears have been seen at that season. But the numbers of these birds which, in the autumn, visit the southern part of that country, are vastly greater than can be found in any part of Ireland. Mr. J. V. Stewart, writing of the north-west of Donegal, informs us, that "the old wheatears, which are among our first spring visitants, take their departure from this place soon after the young ones can provide for themselves." It is added, that "this may account for what White mentions—their being found about this period in great numbers on the downs

of Sussex, where, until then, they are scarcely met with." The young birds are stated, by Mr. Stewart, to remain a month or six weeks longer than the old.

Throughout our wild mountain-pastures and turf-bogs, as well as the rabbit-burrows, sand-hills, and rocks, that skirt the coast, the wheatear is found in its season, and in the first-mentioned localities, where, even at the most genial period of the year, we see but few of the feathered tribe, is highly attractive, from the beauty of its plumage, lively habits, and variously uttered song. In the other localities too, we see but few birds in summer, but with the ever-living sea in view, the want of them is not felt, as in the mountain solitude. I have walked in the middle of July, over the marine sand-hills of Magilligan from east to west, a distance of about ten miles, and met only with wheatears, larks, titlarks, and grey-linnets. About artificial embankments, and in populous neighbourhoods, the wheatear will sometimes come under our notice:—at the outer dock-yard of Belfast we have even seen it, robin-like, perched on piles of timber. In its wild haunts around this town, it has become much scarcer of late years, and has deserted some places altogether. The situation of the nest varies according to the haunts, being in old stone walls, on the ground, among débris of rocks, &c. In the last, it may be found about the Giant's Causeway, where the species is numerous. I have been much interested in witnessing their flight here in the middle of June; when, from a considerable height, they descended with motionless wings to the precipitous rocks contiguous to their nests: the body drooping below the wings, and the breast puffed out, impart to them a very singular appearance. The wheatear is not specially looked after for the table in the north of Ireland; for which purpose, indeed, the species does not appear in sufficient numbers.* Rutty, in his Natural History of the county of Dublin, has remarked that "it is excellent food, and very fat, and for its delicacy is by some called the Irish ortolan" (vol. i. p. 313).

* Mr. St. John, too, informs us in his 'Wild Sports of the Highlands' that it is never sought after in Morayshire, p. 140.

In Holland, France, Switzerland, &c., I have seen the species, commonly in summer and autumn. When proceeding from Malta to the Morea in H.M.S. Beacon, in April, 1841, one of these birds on migration, came on board on the 23rd, when we were eighty miles from Malta, and fifty from Cape Passaro; it remained in the vessel all day. On the 26th, when about ninety miles from Zante, and 130 from Navarino, another alighted, as did likewise the still more beautiful pied-wheatear, (*Saxicola leucomela*), and a whinchat (*Sax. rubetra*). On the 28th of April, wheatears were met with about Navarino; and on the 12th of May a few were seen on Mount Pagrus, above Smyrna. Several of the *S. leucomela* appeared about the summit of the loftiest mountain in the island of Syra, on the 7th of May.

THE GRASSHOPPER WARBLER.

Salicaria locustella, Lath. (sp.)
Sylvia „ „

Is probably a regular summer visitant to suitable localities from south to north.

Montagu states that he has found this bird in Ireland (Orn. Dict.), and Templeton remarks that it is "not very uncommon during spring and summer," * which observation is meant to apply to the neighbourhood of Belfast. In M'Skimmin's History of Carrickfergus, it is remarked that this warbler "inhabits thickets and close hedges, and makes a noise in the summer evenings resembling the winding up of a clock, or call of the common grasshopper." For many years, birds considered, from their very peculiar note, to be of this species, were occasionally heard and seen (but the latter very rarely and only for a moment) around Belfast,—in the counties of Down and Antrim,—by my ornithological friends and myself. But no specimen killed either here or anywhere in Ireland,—guns being laid up at the time of the bird's sojourn with us,—came under my examination, until the 25th of July, 1839, when my friend Richard K. Sinclaire, Esq., brought me an adult

* Mag. Nat. Hist., vol. i. p. 405, New Series.

one which he had shot on the preceding evening at the Falls; its stomach was filled with coleopterous insects. Mr. Wm. Sinclaire on visiting the scene of its death on the following evening, and hearing its mate sing, recognised the note as having been often heard by him in the same place for the preceding six or seven years, when he had imagined it to proceed from some insect. This exact locality has not since been frequented by the species, but about a mile distant, the song of one was heard one night in June, 1845, so late as 11 o'clock; and in a subsequent year, on the 29th of April, so late as 12 o'clock. The one locality is less than a mile, the other twice that distance from Belfast, county of Down, in the summer of 1838, the intelligent gamekeeper assured me that he had heard its note (which he correctly imitated) there early in that season. About Killaloe, county of Clare, the Rev. Thomas Knox has seen and heard a bird, the note and habits of which correspond with those of the grasshopper warbler, but no specimen has been obtained for examination. Mr. R. Davis in a letter dated August 2nd, 1838, mentioned this species as breeding within a few miles of Clonmel, whence a nest containing four eggs was brought to him, about two months before that time. He kindly sent for my inspection an adult male bird, which was shot near Wexford, on the 11th of June, 1843, by Mr. Poole, who remarked that it frequented the thorn bushes on a fence, and would sing while he was close to it, adding, that "its peculiar rotatory song bears no greater resemblance to anything than to the running out of a slick wheel." Mr. R. Ball remarks that he has often heard its curious voice, like the tapping of two stones together, in the neighbourhood of Youghal.

THE SEDGE WARBLER.

Salicaria phragmitis, Bechst. (sp.)
Sylvia „ „
—— *salicaria*, Lath.

Is a regular summer visitant from south to north.

It is generally observed around Belfast within the first ten days of May, and once only have I been aware of its arrival not taking

place within that time; this was in 1842, when it was not seen until the 13th of the month. In 1836, one was observed as early as the 16th of April; and in 1844, on the 18th of that month. Although this bird and the whitethroat usually arrive about the same time, the sedge warbler is generally the first seen, but in 1842, the contrary occurred in the districts which came under my own observation, white-throats having appeared on the 23rd of April, and the allied species not until the 13th of May. The 5th of September is the latest date at which I have known it to be met with,—when one was seen and heard to sing on the banks of the Lagan; but further observation may perhaps show that the bird remains until a later period, as it does in England.* The migration of the sedge warbler extends to the extreme north-west of Ireland, where on the 1st of July, 1832, I heard and saw one near Dunfanaghy :—Mr. Stewart, in his Catalogue of the Birds, &c., of Donegal, observes that the species is common. This gentleman further remarks that "it is one of the latest of our spring visitants, and certainly one of the most interesting in its manners, though from its shy habits and constant restlessness, it is difficult of access; and from the unceasing variety of its borrowed song, and its retirement, often passed unnoticed. Often have I been so deceived by its imitative strain, that on its assuming the clear note of the thrush, the hoarse twitter of the sparrow, or the vocal power of some other songster, I have given up my pursuit of it, supposing it must have stolen off in a different direction, and have only been undeceived when it has had recourse to its natural harsh, chiding, and oft repeated note. Frequently it rises above the brake in which, perhaps, concealed his helpmate is assiduously attending to the duties of incubation, and beguiles her of her weary hours, by imitating the lark, both in its melodious strains and gestures." —Loudon's Mag. Nat. Hist. vol. v. p. 581. Mr. James R. Garrett has frequently heard the sedge warbler make a cricket-like noise for a long time, as the grasshopper warbler is described to do, and then suddenly burst out into the song of the swallow, or some other bird. Throughout the northern counties generally,

* Selby's Ill. Brit. Orn. vol. i. p. 202.

it has occurred to me in suitable localities, and is not confined to where "reeds and other tall aquatic plants abound" (or even grow), as is described; but is found in the lower grounds about old ditch-banks, on which the sloe or blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and other shrubby plants afford a safe asylum; also on the banks of mountain rivulets at as great an elevation as the spontaneous growth of the willow or any underwood forms sufficient shelter. It likewise frequents the wooded borders of well-kept ponds, where none of the aquatic plants alluded to appear.

Although perhaps too common-place to be remarked here, it is simply from natural inclination, and not from shyness, that the sedge warbler inhabits the "tangled brake." When perched, singing on a reed, this species has admitted my approach within about three paces without ceasing its song; and I have been amused at its practice, so contrary to that of other birds, of singing only when I closely passed the bush in which it was. What may perhaps be termed its boldness, is evinced by any object flung into its haunt, prompting the bird to sing, as if in defiance of the interruption, or, as a well-known author might imagine, "to keep *its* courage up." The amusing song of this species is sometimes heard from its arrival until the end of July, indeed until its departure, and by night as well as by day. It is *the* warbler chiefly heard in summer nights, and consequently has been honoured by the flattering appellation of Irish nightingale. A bird described to me by the Rev. T. Knox, as frequenting the county of Westmeath and the vicinity of the river Shannon, is, I have little doubt, the sedge warbler. In Connemara, it is said to be common; also in the counties of Cork, Tipperary, Waterford, and Wexford. With reference to the last, Mr. Poole communicates the dates of its arrival in six years to be April 22, 28, 30; May 9, 10, 15 ,—the departure in one year is noted 13th of August, but the young birds remained longer. The nest is also remarked to be "in brakes or bushes, rushes, &c., close over the stream or pond the bird frequents;" and the eggs as obtained on the 2nd of June. "*July*, 4, 1846.—A sedge warbler's nest found in a

marsh at Springmount, near Clough, was placed in the midst of about half a dozen of reeds, and supported by the grass at their roots. It contained three eggs, of a dark stone colour, with a few slight streaks of a dark hue. The male bird was singing among the reeds near the nest, while the female was sitting on it." *

REED WREN.

Salicaria arundinacea, Briss. (sp.)
Sylvia „ Lath.

Mr. Templeton has informed us that he "once saw this bird in the vicinity of Belfast;" and Mr. R. J. Montgomery, that he shot a male specimen, at Raheny, near Dublin, on the 21st of December, 1843. Although a regular summer visitant to England, it appears not to have been met with in the western or northern counties; † nor to have occurred in Scotland. ‡

THE BLACK-CAP.

Curruca atricapilla, Linn. (sp.)
Motacilla „ „
Sylvia „ Lath.

Is perhaps a regular summer visitant, to certain districts, but must be considered very local in Ireland.

Although pretty generally distributed in England, the black-cap, according to Mr. Macgillivray, is "met with sparingly in the southern districts of Scotland" (vol. ii. p. 344); and is remarked by Sir Wm. Jardine to be rather local in his "own vicinity," in Dumfries-shire, having appeared there only within the last few years (B. B. vol. ii. p. 130; 1839). Around Belfast are districts apparently well suited to this warbler, which is, however, of extremely rare occurrence. Mr. Templeton noticed it as seen at his own residence, Cranmore, on the 17th of June, 1818, and twice since. On the 1st of March, 1834, an adult male specimen was brought to a bird preserver's in Belfast by the Bishop of Down, in whose garden, within a few miles of the town, it had

* J. R. Garrett. † Selby; Yarrell. ‡ Jard.; Macg.

been shot, either on that or the preceding day. These are the only instances known to me of its occurrence in the neighbourhood. When at Shane's Castle Park, on the 30th of July, 1839, accompanied by Mr. Selby and the Rev. Edw. Bigge (of Merton College, Oxford) the song of a bird which I had not before heard, attracted me; and the attention of the former gentleman being called to it, he stated it to be unquestionably that of the black-cap, with which he was quite familiar: the bird was on the south bank of the river Main, near its junction with Lough Neagh. On the following day we heard the song of another repeated for a long time in Massareene Park, on the opposite side of the lake; the bird was in underwood contiguous to a small garden. Neither songster was seen.

A male black-cap was shot in the first week of December, 1833, near Dublin. About the middle of May, 1844, a pair was was seen among the underwood of the Zoological Garden, Phœnix Park, where in a previous year one bird had been observed. At another and distant part of this very extensive park, the black-cap has been met with in different years. Two of these birds were shot in December, 1843, (one of them on the 23rd of the month,) by Mr. R. J. Montgomery, at the Manor House, Raheny, near Dublin. At Donnybrook, too, near the metropolis, the black-cap was obtained, in the month of October, 1846; and at Rathfarnham, in the same county, one of these birds was killed in the last week of January, 1847. One, procured at the vale of Avoca, county of Wicklow, on the 23rd of May, 1837, came under my inspection in Dublin; and it was stated that a few more had been seen at the same time.

The collection of Mr. R. Davis, junr., of Clonmel, contains a black-cap killed in that neighbourhood on the 27th of December, 1834; it was, when shot, accompanied by five or six others. The late Mr. Henry Fennell of Ballibrado, county of Tipperary, met with the black-cap breeding there in different years, and procured specimens of the adult and young birds; also of the eggs. A coloured drawing of a bird shot on the 9th of October, 1830, near the town of Waterford, and kindly sent thence for my in-

spection by Dr. Burkitt, represented a female or young male black-cap :—on the 21st of August, 1834, one of these birds was seen by this gentleman near Dunmore, county of Waterford. One was shot on a hedge-row at the rectory of Dunmore, county of Galway, and about seven miles from Tuam, on the 1st of November, 1842. It had been observed there for the few preceding days; the specimen was kindly forwarded for my examination by the Rev. B. J. Clarke of Tuam. A female or young male black-cap, in Mr. R. Ball's collection, was found dead in his father's garden in the town of Youghal, in the second week of January, 1838. Dr. Harvey mentions in the Fauna of Cork, that he saw two of these birds in company in November, 1839, both of which were taken.

The wintering of the black-cap in Ireland, as shown in various instances from north to south, is a singular circumstance. Being generally considered one of the latest summer birds appearing in England,* it may, I think, be fairly concluded that the occurrence of an individual on the 1st of March, at which date one was obtained near Belfast, is rather indicative of a winter residence than of an unprecedentedly early arrival. The black-cap has in a few instances been procured in England during winter.†

The bird described in Rutty's Natural History of the County of Dublin, vol. i. p. 317, as the "black-cap," is obviously not the *Sylvia Atricapilla.*

THE GARDEN WARBLER.

Greater Pettychaps.

Curruca hortensis, Bechst.
Sylvia „ Lath.

Seems to be extremely rare in this island.

The following observations on this species are copied from the

* Mr. Henry Doubleday of Epping, remarks in a letter to a mutual correspondent that he has often seen the black-cap in March, and therefore looks upon it as one of the earliest summer visitants.

† Yarr. B. B. vol. ii. p. 308. 2nd edit.

MS. of the late John Templeton, Esq.:—"On the 21st of May, 1820, I had the pleasure of seeing this bird, to whose haunt in my garden I was attracted by its pleasing melody. It was not very shy, coming near enough to be distinctly seen, but was extremely restless, flitting every moment from place to place, and only stationary on the branch while it gave out its song. The male continued to sing until the young were reared, when his song ceased for about a fortnight; then it was again renewed, as I suppose on the construction of a second nest." By Dr. Harvey of Cork, I have been informed, that his cousin, the late Mr. Henry Fennell of Ballibrado, county of Tipperary, ascertained that this species bred there in more years than one: both old and young birds and eggs were procured. For several years past it has frequented the rich gardens about Sunday's Well,* Cork.

The Garden Warbler is one of the regular summer visitants to England, but would seem to be less common in Scotland, though much more frequent there than in Ireland.

THE WHITE-THROAT.

Curruca cinerea, Lath. (sp.)
Sylvia „ „
Motacilla sylvia, Linn.

Is a regular summer visitant from south to north.

This bird is well known in Ireland. Like the sedge warbler it generally appears about Belfast early in May; but on the 24th of April, 1836, was observed at Cromac in the neighbourhood of the town. On the 23rd of April, 1842, I heard its song in the district of the Falls, and on the following two or three days, heard several singing about the river Lagan, and therefore believed that the general arrival had taken place: in M'Skimmin's History of Carrickfergus (p. 354, 2nd edit.), it is mentioned as being once heard near that city on the 21st of April. One was seen by Mr. J. R. Garrett on the 15th of September, 1837, the latest date at

* Dr. Harvey, on the authority of Mr. R. Parker.

which I am aware of the species having been observed here. Near Raheny, county of Dublin, one was shot in December, 1843, by Mr. R. J. Montgomery, about the same time that a reed warbler, and two blackcaps, were obtained.

The white-throat is a regular summer visitant to the extreme north-west of Ireland, and according to information received, is so to the neighbourhood of Killaloe, and to the counties of Tipperary, Wexford, Cork, and Kerry. Its earliest arrival in the county of Wexford noted by my correspondent is the 1st of May, and the latest seen in autumn, on the 21st of August;* but there can be little doubt, both of its arrival being earlier, and its stay later, than those dates denote.

The song is commenced on arrival, and generally ceases early in the month of July. Its habits, and the grotesquely earnest appearance which the erected feathers on the crown of the head and the distended throat impart when singing, render this bird one of the most interesting of our warblers. When on one of its harmonious flights, the white-throat does not uniformly return to the same place, though it generally does so. I have seen one rise from a low bush, singing in its upward and irregular flight, alight on a leafless tree at some little distance, and there continue to pour forth its notes without intermission, as if perched in the same place all the time. At the Falls early in the summer of 1833, the white-throat was several times heard to imitate the songs of other birds, after the manner of the sedge warbler.

Mr. J. R. Garrett has seen at least half a dozen of its nests about Cromac, where they were generally placed in brambles or the wild rose, with growing grass concealing them from observation; the eggs were generally five in number. This species would seem to prefer placing its nest in thorny plants, as all of those just mentioned were of that description. Indeed, the white-throat appears to be particularly partial to districts still in a state of nature, where the plants alluded to flourish in all their wild luxuriance. In the romantic district of this kind, bounding the sea northward of Glenarm, I have remarked the species to be parti-

* Mr. Poole.

cularly abundant. Early in July, 1837, a nest containing eggs was discovered at the "Falls," within about ten paces of a public highway, and twice that distance from an occupied dwelling-house. It was elevated about a foot above the ground, in a sloe-bush, and concealed by the growing grass of a late meadow. White-throats, perched on hedges or underwood, with caterpillars in their bills, denoting the vicinity of the nestlings, will often permit our approach within a few paces, all the time keeping a great uproar, consisting of a mere repetition of the word *churr*.

A young white-throat caught in the middle of June when just fledged, was taken home by the captor. It was at first fed on bread and milk, and worms, but on the third day began to catch flies for itself, when taken near to them. It became perfectly tame. Its favourite perch was the finger of its owner, from which it very expertly picked up the "flies on the window-panes of the house."*

On April the 23rd, 1841, when on the way from Malta to the Morea, in H.M.S. Beacon, a white-throat, migrating northwards, flew on board, when we were 80 miles from Malta, and 50 from Cape Passaro, the nearest land: when walking about Navarino on the 28th, my attention was called to one by its song.

In Dr. Patrick Brown's "Catalogue of the Birds of Ireland," published in Exshaw's Magazine for 1772, I find,—"*Motacilla Curruca*, White-bellied Nightingale, seen about Ballydangan, in May, 1774, Brown." To the Catalogue a notice of the "ska or white-throat" is also appended. No specimen of the Lesser White-throat (*S. curruca*) obtained in Ireland, has as yet come under my own notice, or that of any of my correspondents by whom the species is known, but I anticipate its being added to the Irish Fauna: the gun being very rarely directed against warblers, may be the reason that it has not yet been met with. Its occurrence, even in the south of Scotland, was not known to Sir Wm. Jardine at the time of his writing the "British Birds;" Mr. Macgillivray, however, notices the species as met with there, but as being "very uncommon," vol. ii. p. 358.

* Garrett.

When in H.M.S. Beacon, on the 25th of April, 1841, and about 60 miles from Calabria (the nearest land), and 135 east of Mount Etna, a scops-eared owl was knocked down on the deck and captured, just as he had clutched a lesser whitethroat (*S. curruca*), of which species two or three appeared. On the 26th another *S. curruca* alighted, when the vessel was about 90 miles from Zante (the nearest land), and 130 from Navarino. On this day, a sub-alpine warbler (*Sylvia subalpina*, Bonelli)—a south of Europe species—also came on board.

THE WOOD WREN.

Sylvia sylvicola, Lath.
„ *sibilatrix*, Bechst.

Holds a very doubtful place in our Fauna.

In my series of papers on the Birds of Ireland, the following appeared:—Relying on the accuracy of a relative, who has bestowed much attention on birds and their nests, I should be disposed to give this species a place here with confidence but for one character, hereafter to be mentioned. On June 19th, 1832, it is remarked of a nest he detected on the ground in a small meadow surrounded by a wooded glen at Wolf-hill, near Belfast, that it belonged to a bird most nearly approaching the willow wren, (*S. Trochilus*,) but larger, and with a whiter breast; and that the eggs, instead of being marked with numerous very minute, and a few large specks of a dark pink colour, like those of the *S. Trochilus*, were dotted all over, so much so as to give the egg, at a cursory view, a light-brown appearance. Sketches of these eggs and of those of the willow wren, made at the time, are now before me, and present the difference here pointed out. He observes that it was a very pretty nest, formed of moss, and lined with feathers.* On the morning of the 19th of June it contained one egg, on the 21st three, and on the 24th five eggs; on July the 7th

* This is the only character against its being that of the *S. sibilatrix*, whose nest is stated by authors to differ from that of the *S. Trochilus* in *not* being lined with feathers.

the young were hatched, and on the 19th had left the nest: thus in six days the complement of eggs was laid, in thirteen they were incubated, and in eleven or twelve days the young were fledged. There was a second nest at the same place that season, containing similar eggs.

In the Fauna of Cork, it is remarked by Dr. Harvey:—"I am inclined to believe that the wood wren (*S. sibilatrix*, Bechst.) is entitled to the place in the Catalogue of Irish Birds, which Mr. Thompson doubtfully assigns to it, on the authority of a friend. This gentleman's observations as to the *nest being lined with feathers*, contrary to the account of it in the different systematic works, entirely coincide with those of my late friend and relative, Mr. Henry Fennell of Ballybrado, in the county of Tipperary. This talented young gentleman, who was an ardent ornithologist, closely observed a few years since, a bird which appeared to him new, and he found both nest and eggs precisely answering the description given by Mr. Thompson, in the Annals of Natural History (vol. i. p. 22). The nest was profusely lined with feathers, and the eggs (two of which are now in my possession) quite differently spotted from those of the willow wren, and much more densely covered. The bird was larger than either the willow wren or chiff-chaff, and whiter underneath," p. vii. These, and the preceding notes, do not go farther than affording some circumstantial evidence in favour of the wood wren being a summer visitant:—proof is still wanting.

This bird appears to be pretty generally distributed over England including the west, and is found northward to the middle districts of Scotland.* Authors state that it differs from the *S. trochilus* and *S. hippolais*, by having a decided preference for old woods or trees, and these are much less numerous in Ireland than in either England or Scotland, which may be one reason for the *S. sibilatrix* not visiting this island like its congeners just named. In July, 1826, this species came under my observation in Switzerland.

* Jard.; Macg.

THE WILLOW WREN.

Sylvia trochilus, Linn. (sp.)
Motacilla „ „

Is a regular summer visitant, and commonly dispersed over suitable localities throughout the island.

Montagu has remarked that "it is frequently found with the wood wren, but does not extend so far to the west in England, as it is rarely met with in Cornwall." If there be thus a diminution of numbers to the west in England, the circumstance must arise from some other cause than geographical situation, as in Ireland the willow wren ranges to the counties jutting out to the extreme south-west and north-west of the island, being common both to Kerry and to Donegal.*

In the neighbourhood of Belfast, this species generally appears about the middle of April, when its presence is at once proclaimed by its song. My notes of the earliest arrival here during eleven years, are April, 6th, 1833; 7th, 1834; 8th, 1844:—the latest, April 24th, 1837 (a very late spring); and 23rd in 1842, on which day they appeared very generally in different districts. So early as the 2nd of April, 1848, a willow wren was seen near that town. When on the island of Ireland's Eye, off the Dublin coast, on the 23rd of April, 1835, a flock of eight of these birds appeared, from which one was shot. They were doubtless on migration, but were not the earliest comers, as the species was observed on the 20th of the same month about Belfast.

The willow wren is commonly seen until the middle of September. On the 24th of this month, and on the 10th of October, 1832, I heard it sing; on the former occasion incessantly so long as I gave attention,—about half an hour. From the period of arrival until moulting commences, the song of the willow wren is constantly heard; and so soon as that process is over, is recommenced, often in a weaker tone, and continued during fine weather

* In Mr. Stewart's Catalogue the willow wren is set down as "common" in Donegal, where I have myself remarked it to be so. By Mr. T. F. Neligan, of Tralee, it was stated to be very common in Kerry.

until the time of departure. The young birds, too, may sometimes be heard going over their notes in a much weaker tone than the old ones. Mr. J. V. Stewart gives a representation of the song in musical notes, in Loudon's Magazine of Natural History, vol. v. p. 581.

A friend who has had many nests of the willow wren, describes them all to have been composed of fine hay,* and lined with feathers. They were situated on the ground at the foot of trees, except in two instances, in one of which the nest was placed in a meadow, several yards distant from the hedge; and in the other, on the side of a ditch-bank, about four feet above the level ground. There was usually a long approach to them through the brake. My correspondent at Clonmel has met with a nest in ivy, upon a wall. Towards the end of August, I was once amused on perceiving several willow wrens rising into the air from some pea-rods in our garden, after the manner of the spotted flycatcher when on its aërial captures: two of them were thus occasionally occupied at the same time. A few flycatchers (*Muscicapa grisola*) were also on the pea-rods, from which they now and then sallied after their winged prey, having thus apparently prompted the *S. Trochilus* to these flights.

In the north of Ireland, this species frequents plantations, from those of the little garden or spacious square in the town, to the most elevated on the mountains. Although, from the circumstance of its general occurrence in pleasure-grounds and gardens the name of "willow wren" may be thought "unmeaning," † I cannot so consider it. This name was doubtless bestowed upon the bird originally on account of its partiality to willows, which I have frequently remarked the twigs and branches of the commmon osier (*Salix viminalis*), abounding with aphides, being on such occasions its chief favourite. I have never seen these birds so numerous anywhere,—several continental countries, as France, Italy, &c.,

* From the use of this material in the construction of its nests, the willow wren in some places, received the name of *hay-bird*.

† See note to White's Selborne, p. 84, ed. 1837.

where I have met with it being included, in addition to the British Islands,—as they were for many years in a certain hedge-row of these trees in the neighbourhood of Belfast. On some scattered trees of the *Salix Smithiana* in the same locality, they were, for a similar reason, almost equally plentiful. In parts of the south of Ireland, the species is known by the name of *lady bird.*

A young willow wren caught at the "Falls," soon after having left the nest, became at once, from its familiarity, very attractive. When at liberty in a room, and called by the name of "*Sylvia,*" it immediately flew to and alighted on a finger held out for the purpose, and was so partial to this unnatural perch, as, like a hooded hawk upon the "fist," to remain stationary there when carried out of doors to feed upon the aphides infesting some monthly roses near the house. It did not attempt even to fly to the plants, but rested from choice upon the finger.* To the regret of its owners, this bird did not live long, in consequence, as was supposed, of excessive washing.

I am indebted to Mr. Poole for the following remarks on the willow wren:—

"A bird of this species which I had taken from its nest to examine, on being set at liberty, was quickly on its nest again, notwithstanding all the fright it had undergone. There can scarcely be a more beautiful sight to an ornithologist or general lover of nature than a family of willow wrens manœuvring amongst the hedge-rows on a hot day, in the delightful month of July. Nothing can exceed the downy softness of the lower parts of the young willow wren, which, with its yellow mouth, velvet plumage, and timid yet confiding manner, is altogether as touching an emblem of absolute innocence as can be conceived. The mother with her ceaseless "twee, twee," flies anxiously around you, uneasily endeavouring to instil into her beautiful charge her own distrust of your proximity. As soon as she has succeeded in

* About Ryde, Isle of Wight, this species was common at the end of July and beginning of August, 1841, and from the windows of our house looked very beautiful, ascending the branches and twigs of rose-trees, on which it was most usefully employed, in clearing them of injurious insects.

prevailing on them for the first time to admit suspicion into their guileless bosoms, off hurries the whole interesting group with quick and undulating motion to the nearest tree or young plantation in sight; yet there, if you follow them cautiously and noiselessly, they will re-admit you to nearly former familiarity, and so enable you to pry once more into the mysteries of their œconomical department."

In April, 1841, this species was met with as follows in H.M.S. Beacon in the Mediterranean:—23rd, eighty miles from Malta, and fifty from Cape Passaro, the nearest land, one flew on board: —25th, about sixty miles from Calabria, and 135 from Mount Etna, another appeared; one which I caught, perched quietly on my finger, and was so carried about to feed on flies, which it seized when within reach, never leaving the hand if the fly could possibly be captured thence:—26th, eighty miles from Zante, 130 from Navarino, a willow wren and a chiff-chaff (*S. rufa*) were found dead in my cabin. They had not been caught or injured in any way, and must, I think, have died from fatigue; want of food could hardly have caused their death, as there were plenty of flies in the cabin. On this same day, one of Natterer's warblers (*Sylvia Nattereri*, Temminck,), a south of Europe species, was caught.

I possess a specimen of the *S. Trochilus*, which flew on board a ship in 1834, to the north-west of the Azores, in latitude 44° N. and longitude 34° W.; the date, unfortunately, was not communicated.

THE CHIFF-CHAFF.

Lesser Pettychaps.

Sylvia rufa, Lath.
„ *hippolais*, Penn, &c.*

Is a regular summer visitant to certain localities from south to north,

It differs from the willow wren in being very partially, instead of generally, distributed, a remark which applies not only to the island at large, but to limited districts. Around Belfast—in the counties of Down and Antrim—this bird is known only as a regular visitant to very few places. These (whether in the mountain glen or demesne in the valley) are where there is abundance of wood, and more especially where, in addition, cover from underwood prevails. This preference appears singular, as the chiff-chaff generally frequents the higher trees. In other parts of these counties, as among the beautiful plantations bordering the gently flowing Main through Shane's Castle Park, I have met with it, as my friend R. K. Sinclaire, Esq. ,has done, in the wooded glens about Cushendall towards the north of Antrim; and about Bryansford and Rosstrevor, in Down, where the bases of the mountains are well clothed with wood. At the Botanic Garden, Glasnevin, and the Phœnix Park, Dublin, I have heard the notes of the chiff-chaff, which is said to be a regular summer visitant to that quarter. It is common in woods within two miles of Clonmel through the

* The following note was published in my series of papers on the Birds of Ireland, in 1838. "As a difference of opinion exists about this bird, (see note to White's Selborne, pp. 80 *et seq.*, ed. 1837) I had intended entering fully into the subject; but turning to the description of the species in the 'Manual of British Vertebrate Animals,' p. 112, I find it to accord so well with my specimens,—which, being shot in the month of April, when uttering their notes, may be considered adults,—as to render further observation unnecessary. The terms *Syl. Hippolais*, Lath., and chiff-chaff have been correctly used as synonymous in the best British works. The original description in the 'Index Ornithologicus' (vol. ii. p. 507) in a few words marks the species; Temminck however, in his valuable 'Manuel' of the Birds of Europe, (part i. p. 222) has adopted Latham's name for a continental *Sylvia*, very different from the one to which it was applied by this author." *June* 15th, 1848:—The first individual of this species (*S. hippolais*, Temm.), known to visit the British Islands, was killed at this date, at Eythorne, near Dover. *Daily News. Athenæum*, July 29, 1848, p. 756, where full particulars will be found.

summer, and the eggs have been obtained near Clogheen.* It is found about Waterford;† is said to be numerous during summer about Castle Warren,‡ and Glengariff, county of Cork;§ and has been obtained near Tralee, in Kerry. §

The period of the chiff-chaff's arrival in the north of Ireland seems to be very uncertain: the earliest noted appeared on the 3rd of April, and on the 7th of that month, it was seen in 1838 and 1844; but on the 29th of April, 1832, and on the 30th, in 1837 || and 1840, not one could be heard in Colin Glen, the chief haunt of the species in the vicinity of Belfast. Several were heard and seen here on the 15th of April, 1847, a year in which the vernal migrants were very late in making their appearance, so much so, that this was the only species of them that I met with during a walk of twelve miles over a country of varied character as to scenery, and in which the earlier visitants, had they arrived, would have occurred: in the middle of May I have been for the greater part of a day in Colin Glen, without once hearing its notes, though during a similar time, a month before, they were almost constantly uttered, and when the days alluded to were equally fine. A certain progress of their broods may have caused the silence: after this period, we again hear the notes. On the 21st of March, 1848, in which year, the summer birds arrived very early, this species was observed at Raheny, near Dublin.¶ The chiff-chaff is considered the earliest of the summer warblers in visiting Great Britain.

The time of this bird's departure from the north of Ireland has not been particularly attended to, but on the 8th of September, 1832, one was heard at Bryansford. I cannot agree with Mr. Macgillivray respecting its notes resembling "the syllables cheep, cheep, cheep, cheep, chee, rather than, chiff-chaff, cherry-churry," vol. ii. p. 381. The species is not noticed by this author or Sir Wm. Jardine, as found in Scotland, north of the vicinity of Edinburgh.

* Davis. † Burkitt. ‡ Mr. R. Warren, junr.

§ Report, Dublin Nat. Hist. Society, 1841–42, p. 8.

|| Birds generally—willow wren, wheatear, &c.—very late in arrival this spring.

¶ Mr. R. J. Montgomery.

The occurrence of this bird crossing the Mediterranean at the migratory period in spring, will be found noticed under the willow wren.

GOLD-CRESTED REGULUS.

Gold-crested Wren.

Regulus cristatus, Will.; Ray.
Motacilla regulus, Linn.
Sylvia, „ Lath.

This very small and beautiful bird is common, and resident in plantations throughout Ireland.

In the north its song is occasionally commenced early in the month of February,* and has been heard at the end of September. On one occasion, when a friend was attending to the process of nidification adopted by a chaffinch which built within view of his window at Cromac, it was discovered that he was not the only spectator, a regulus at some little distance being also recognised as a looker-on, and, as afterwards proved, with sinister intent. When the chaffinch took flight from the nest, this bird, in the most cunning manner, stole round in an opposite direction and carried off part of the materials. Such was its common practice, as observed in at least a dozen instances; but the chaffinch eventually discovering the regulus in the act, gave it a severe chase through the plantation, and its mal-practices were never afterwards known to be repeated. More than this isolated instance of theft can be brought against the "gold-crest;" for another friend remarks, from personal observation, that "the nest is open at the top and like a chaffinch's, from whose nest it steals the materials for its own." Notes are before me of three nests, observed in the same summer. One was placed in a cypress; another was neatly fixed to the branch of a silver-fir whose spinous leaves shaded the little opening of one inch diameter; it was

* Mr. S. Poole has heard it in the county of Wexford on the 3rd of January.

composed of moss mixed with a kind of fine wool-like substance, and lined with feathers; the third, composed of similar materials, was in a laurustinus and shaded by the leaves of the shrub: so late as the 18th of July it contained four young. The three plants just named, are favourite sites for the nest; for which evergreen shrubs and young coniferous trees are generally selected. The gentleman first alluded to, once remarked, to his surprise, that the eggs in a nest were placed regularly in two rows with the small ends touching each other. On the 14th of April, 1848, earlier than usual, a nest with eggs, was found near Belfast. Mr. Poole, on the 16th of April, has observed a nest containing eight eggs.

Soon after the young can provide for themselves, they and their parents flit about in company, and ring their little changes throughout every plantation. In the first autumns that they thus came under my observation, I was rather disposed, from hearing them simultaneously everywhere around Belfast, to believe in a migration from the north (vide Selby's Ill. Brit. Orn., vol. i. p. 230, 2nd ed.), but having subsequently heard them in different years so early as the month of August, I now consider that it is our indigenous birds alone, which, by constantly uttering their little cries, thus attract attention. These remarks were published in 1838, in my series of papers in the Annals of Natural History, and it is only to be added, that I consider the opinion then expressed still correct as to the birds seen very early in the autumn, yet, on two subsequent years, when the species came particularly under my observation, I felt certain of a migration of these birds to the neighbourhood of Belfast at the end of September and beginning of October. All at once numbers then appeared, and their little chorus was heard throughout a whole district, in a part of which none were known to breed in the one year, and but a single nest was observed in the other. Mr. Selby gives a most interesting account of a great migration of these birds to Northumberland, and adds, that before witnessing it, he "was convinced, from the great and sudden increase of the species during the autumnal and hyemal months, that our indigenous birds must be augmented by a body of strangers making these shores their winter resort."

Sir. Wm. Jardine too, writing from Dumfries-shire, speaks of "the time of migration, about November, when our accession of numbers arrives," B. B. vol. ii. p. 157.

The gold-crested regulus seems not to be the hardy bird that authors generally imagine. In the north of Ireland it has frequently been found dead about the hedges, not only in severe weather, but after slight frosts.* To the green-houses and hot-houses in the garden of a relative near Belfast, these birds resorted so regularly in the mild winter of 1831–32, that some were captured weekly throughout the season, and taken to one of our bird-preservers: on the rere-wall of the houses is a range of sheds accessible to birds, and dense plantations of trees and evergreen shrubs are quite contiguous. They were occasionally caught at all seasons, as were common wrens and titmice — many of both—together with robins, sparrows, and chaffinches. All these birds, except the robin, were cruelly sacrificed by the ignorant gardener for their intrusion into the houses, though by the destruction of insects they must have been eminently serviceable to the plants under his charge. Winter too, being the chief season of their visits, they could, even if so disposed, do little or no injury. Early in the winter of 1835, three of these birds, which had been captured by a cat in a small garden, in a very populous part of Belfast, were brought to me, and on the preceding day, four or five had in the same place shared a similar fate. In the middle of December, 1846, after a few days of frost and snow, I observed a regulus fly from a plantation at the road-side several times, and alight at the base of the demesne wall bounding the foot-way on which I walked. That done, it ascended the wall, picking for insects like a creeper (*Certhia familiaris*), but less continuously than that species. I was several times within two or three feet of the bird, and had I been so cruel, could have killed it with my walking-stick.

Of five stomachs of the regulus which have come under my inspection in the months of December, January and May, four

* In a note to White's Selborne (p. 180, ed. 1837), Mr. Herbert gives instances of the fatal effect of cold on caged individuals.

were entirely filled with insects, chiefly minute Coleoptera; and the fifth contained seeds of two or three kinds in addition to fragments of stone.

I shall transcribe some notes on this species just as they were made. *Dec.*, 1839. A regulus, in the collection of Mr. R. Ball, of Dublin, obtained in that neighbourhood, attracted my attention by exhibiting a *white* streak continuously from one eye to the other, and which is consequently interposed between the black band bounding the crest and the bill; the crest was of the ordinary brilliant colour. On my return home, a specimen of my own, killed near Belfast, was examined, and displayed a similar white band, but not so conspicuously, between the eyes: in all other characters these birds agreed with the *R. cristatus* of authors. Several others were examined, but none exhibited the white which possibly may be peculiar to adult males, as the brightness of the crests in both individuals possessing it, indicated them to be: the sex of all those referred to was unknown. At the end of February, 1844, I obtained another specimen with the white marking, that proved on dissection to be a male. None of the authors, to whose works I have referred, describe these white bands in the *R. cristatus*. Temminck, remarks that it is "sans aucun indice de bandes blanchâtres," vol. i. p. 229: in which Jenyns follows him, p. 113; Montagu (Orn. Dict.); Selby (p. 231); Yarrell, Macgillivray, Jardine (in Brit. Birds), say nothing of the white, disposed as above mentioned. The last author, however, when comparing *R. cristatus* with *R. reguloides*, in his edition of Wilson's American Ornithology, (vol. i. p. 127), incidentally observes, that "the white streak *above* the eye is better marked" in the latter than in the former species:—the extent of the white line is not mentioned. Wilson, in describing the American bird, which he regarded as *R. cristatus*, remarked, that "a line of white passed round the frontlet, extending over and beyond the eye on each side," ib. p. 130. This is just the case in the individual to which attention has been particularly called, but the various differential characters in the North American and European birds are considered by Sir. Wm. Jardine, and other ornithologists who have compared them, as decidedly separating the species. A specimen of *R. cristatus*, from Italy—being one of a large collection of admirably stuffed birds from that country, presented by George Lenox Conyngham, Esq., to the Belfast Museum — exhibits the white marking.

At Aberarder, Inverness-shire, I observed this species to be numerous in September, 1842, particularly in Dunmaglass wood, composed chiefly of larch and Scotch fir: about the middle of the month some were heard singing.

The Fire-crested Regulus (*R. ignicapillus*) is stated to have been observed in a garden at Tralee, but without further information, cannot be included in the Irish Fauna.

THE GREAT TIT.*

Parus major, Linn.

Is common and resident,

Frequenting town plantations as well as those in the country. I have observed it also in districts destitute of trees, and where hawthorn hedges afforded the only shelter. Its sawing song, is commenced very early; in three successive years this was heard about Belfast on the 5th of January; 23rd and 24th of Dec.; and towards the end of January was once heard when ice, an inch in thickness, covered the ponds near the songster's station. Some time after the breeding season, as in September, the sawing is again commonly heard. A pair of these birds along with two blue titmice daily, during a winter, visited the window-sill of a friend's house in the country † at a particular hour, where crumbs of bread were laid for them. In the following winter the latter species only renewed its visits, which were daily, until the severe weather in the middle of February, when a pair of great titmice, presumed to be the same, re-appeared, and continued to come as in the former season.

On looking to the food contained in three of the *P. major* killed in February and March, it was found to be seeds, and small coleopterous insects and larvæ. In a friend's garden near Belfast,

* *Titmouse* is the name commonly applied to all the British species of the genus *Parus*.

† They are occasionally seen on the window-sills of our house in Belfast, without being tempted by food; but the house is situated in a square partially planted with trees and shrubs, and before it is a narrow belt of shrubbery.

these birds were in one season seen to watch and seize upon the bees issuing from their hives when they first began to stir about in spring. Vengeance was accordingly let loose upon them, and in the usual undiscriminating manner, from which the whole genus of tits suffered, although a very few individuals of the one species only were known to commit the crime. Shots were to be heard in all directions about the demesne, until the wrath of the owner was appeased by a considerable massacre having taken place. Here, also, the gardener, probably not without reason, accuses this species (which he distinguishes by the name of Billy-nipper) of being very destructive to peas. They are said to break through the pods with their strong bills, opposite the peas, and dislodge them.

I have the excellent testimony of Miss Farrell of Ballibrado, county of Tipperary, to the fact of these birds breaking sound nuts with their bills, a feat frequently observed by this lady. Mr. Poole, too, remarks that they "seem to derive considerable proportion of their autumn subsistence from the kernels of hazel-nuts. They may be heard at that season in every direction in a wood, hammering the nuts on the branches of the trees to break them, a difficult operation it would appear from the incessant labour necessary for the purpose." Mr. C. R. Bree of Stowmarket, has remarked of the blue tit (I presume), which is much less than the present species:—"I have frequently seen the tomtit, which is a much smaller bird, with an infinitely more delicate beak than the nut-hatch, break the stones of the yew-berry and the haw. He carries the stone on to a convenient branch, where he fixes it with his claws, and then makes repeated and quick strokes upon it with his beak, exactly as 'Sutor' has described, like the hammer of a blacksmith. * * * The bird makes by repeated strokes a small hole in the stone, with the fine sharp point of its beak which then acts as a wedge, and the resistance is easily overcome."* I have myself remarked the blue tit drive its bill like a pick-axe into a rotten portion of a tree, thus reminding me of a woodpecker.

* Gardener's Chronicle, July 18th, 1846, p. 480.

THE BLUE TIT.

Bluebonnet. Tomtit.

Parus cæruleus, Linn.

Is very common; more so than any other of the genus, in the island.

Its lively and varied attitudes, as observed in the ordinary places of resort, have often been described. In addition to the more common haunts, this bird is met with as far up the sides of the mountain glens as there is a little underwood for shelter. It feeds pretty much on the highways, and occasionally builds in the walls of town gardens. In winter, whether mild or otherwise, this species is very partial to the reeds (*Arundo phragmitis*) fringing the river Lagan near Belfast, where I have often been much interested in observing numbers of them. The force of one coming against a dead reed sways it almost to the surface of the water, in which the base is immersed, but the titmouse nevertheless maintains its hold; then hurrying to another, alights near its base and rapidly runs up the stem to near the top, and almost dips in the river again: the graceful bend of the reed adds much to the beauty of such a scene.

These birds are known to suffer considerably from the cold of winter, to which they are very sensible, even when kept in the house. One at "the Falls," when let out of the cage in summer, roosted upon the top: but in winter, although in a warm room, selected the hottest place in which it could remain safely for the night, namely, under the fender, a locality which afforded at the same time sufficient space and shelter. This bird, from its familiarity and vivacity, was most amusing. The cage was covered with close netting, which it several times cut through, thereby effecting its escape into the room. It then flew to the children, and having taken hold of a piece of bread or cake in the hand of the youngest, would not forego the object of attack, though shaken with the greatest force the child could exert; indeed, the latter was so persecuted on one occasion for a piece of apple, that she ran crying out of the apartment. It was particularly fond of

sugar. Confined in the same cage with this bird were some other species, and among them a redbreast, which it sometimes annoyed so much as to bring upon its head severe chastisement. A favourite trick was to pull the feathers out of its fellow prisoners. The young willow wren already alluded to was sadly tormented in this way. A similar attempt was even made on a song thrush introduced to its domicile, but it was successfully repelled. This mischievous tit escaped out of doors several times, but always returned without being sought for.

The blue titmouse, as is well known, sometimes chooses singular places for its nest. An ornamental jar in the green-house at Elm Park, near Dublin, was selected in the spring of 1844, though the aperture through which the birds had to pass, to reach its roomy portion, seemed hardly large enough to admit them; they flew into and out of the jar, regardless of persons being present.

Mr. Poole too remarks: "A jar which I placed in a horizontal position on my window-stool was in a few days tenanted by a pair of blue tits, who after cleaning out some rubbish of which they did not approve, have set hard to work to manufacture a snug abode for themselves and progeny. The cock blue tit came one morning to feed the hen with a fly at a time, when she had a bunch of materials for her nest in her mouth. She quickly dropped them, however, and received the proffered morsel with every appearance of gratification at her mate's gallant attention. May 1st: the blue tits at my window-stool are very early risers, indeed generally commencing the labours of the day as soon as light sets in, and consequently long before the sun appears. The cock at first paid little attention to his mate in her labours, farther than by holding himself ready and willing for a fight with any strange birds of his own species that might venture too near his sanctuary —at the commencement another pair used frequently to contest possession — but eventually was very assiduous in feeding her. He came frequently at intervals of half a minute with a fly or caterpillar, and inserting his head at the neck of the jar delivered it to his patient mate.

"In the breeding season I have frequently seen blue tits

striking against the panes of windows, I conclude, in jealous defiance of their own reflections. The pair which built in a jar at my window, after buffeting the unconscious glass for a long time, seemed to gain no wisdom by experience, and, until the hen began to sit, continued as busy at it as ever. The hen indeed seemed chief performer."

The blue titmouse is ready for a fight with more than its own species. A gentleman of my acquaintance states of a pair, which built for three years successively in a fruit tree close to the house in which he lived, that when any persons went near the nest, the bird flew to a neighbouring branch, and not only pecked boldly at them, but would not permit them to drive it away. A pair of these birds built inside a pump, which had not been used for some time, at Abbeylands, near Belfast. The first indication of the circumstance, unfortunately, was the nest and young being ejected into the air, when the pump was again put in requisition. Notwithstanding this misfortune they built again in the same place, and as their so doing was in this instance known, the pump was not used until the brood was safely reared. At a place not two miles distant, the following circumstance, communicated by Mr. Robert Patterson, occurred:—"Having gone one day to dine with a friend living at Ringsend Point, he enquired, did I ever know a bird's nest to be made, and the eggs laid within an hour? On my answering in the expected negative, he told me there was a well from which water for the use of the family was drawn, and a pump, which being what is called "down," was somewhat troublesome to work, but which yielded excellent water for drinking. Going into his parlour on this day before dinner time, the gentleman happened to taste some of the water which had been placed on the side-board, and instantly accused the servant of having drawn it from the well, and not from the pump. The man denied the charge, alleging that it had been pumped up by himself only half an hour before. He was desired to go and pump some more, and his master went with him to see it done. At the first stroke up came little particles of straw, and muddy looking water, and next followed a bird's nest with three eggs!

So that there were but two inferences, either that *the little architect* had built her nest, and laid her eggs in the interval, or else that *the man* had 'told the lie direct,'—an amusing instance of a liar being convicted by the mute testimony of a tomtit."

The titmouse often falls a victim to most unpardonable ignorance in this country, as well as in England, in consequence of the injury it is supposed to do to fruit trees. When in the very act of saving the buds, by picking away from them the insects bent on their destruction, and which man himself with all his power could not destroy, this poor bird is "savagely slaughtered." Mr. Selby most justly pleads in favour of its being a friend rather than an enemy to the horticulturist; and Mr. Knapp, treating of the species very fully in his most agreeable manner, is indignant that it should in these days be ranked as vermin, and a reward be offered for its head. Thanks to Mr. Weir we have some idea of the vast amount of good done by these birds in the destruction of caterpillars, when they have young. This gentleman with extraordinary patience, watched for seventeen hours successively how often a pair fed their nestlings, and ascertained it to be four hundred and seventy-five times; they appeared to be fed solely on caterpillars: "sometimes they brought in a single large one; at other times two or three small ones." (Macgillivray's Brit. Bird, vol. ii. p. 438.) The stomachs of a number of specimens sent to me during different years by bird preservers, from December to March inclusive, contained the remains of coleopterous and other insects, and very few of them, any vegetable food, as seeds, &c.; there was no sand or fragment of stone in any of them.

I have remarked this species in Holland, France, Switzerland, &c., to be about as plentiful as in the British Islands.

THE MARSH TIT.

Parus palustris, Linn.

Is very little known as an Irish species, but has been met in the north, centre (as to latitude), and south.

In Smith's History of the County of Cork it is remarked,

"Besides this species (*Parus major*), there is also the cole titmouse, the blackcap, the blue titmouse or nun, and the long-tailed titmouse." (vol. ii. p. 340, 2nd edit.) If we take for granted that the term "blackcap" is correctly applied to a *Parus*, the marsh titmouse must be considered the one meant. In very few instances has this bird occurred to me around Belfast, and not in any other locality. By two ornithological friends it has once or twice been met with here, and though within a few miles of the town, the localities and times of its appearance to them and myself were always different:—it was observed at the various seasons of the year. The marsh tit has been seen by R. Ball, Esq., only about Ballitore in the county of Kildare. In the collection of T. W. Warren, Esq., of Dublin, a native specimen is preserved, which was shot in the Phœnix Park near that city. Mr. Davis of Clonmel, informed me in May 1844, that some eggs which had been sent to him from the vicinity of Clogheen, county of Tipperary, on being submitted to Mr. Hewitson, were considered to be of this species.*

It is said to be found over England. When walking through the beautiful plantations about Twizell House, Northumberland, in the month of September, with Mr. Selby, this bird appeared quite common, and was stated to be so there at all seasons. About Jardine Hall, Dumfries-shire, on the contrary, as I was informed when there in October 1845, it is now considered only as an occasional visitant, generally appearing in the winter season. Mr. Macgillivray is "not aware of its having been met with farther north [in Scotland] than Fifeshire," vol. ii. p. 446.

THE COAL TIT.

Parus ater, Linn.

Is common in Ireland.

Montagu and Selby remark, that this species is less numerous in England than the *P. palustris*: but the relative proportion between

* Mr. Yarrell, by mistake, states on my authority, that it has been met with in Donegal. It may not improbably yet be found there.

the two species in Ireland is very different. To a few only of my correspondents is the latter known with certainty, but all who have bestowed attention on the subject, attest the presence of the coal titmouse in their respective counties, viz., Donegal, Clare, Kerry, Cork, Tipperary, Wexford, and Dublin. In the north generally, and wherever I have been in suitable localities throughout the country, this bird has commonly occurred. It is interesting in spring to listen to the notes or song of the great, the blue, and the coal titmouse, all having a family resemblance, but each well known from the other by the ornithologist,—

"By him who muses through the woods at noon."

Towards the end of August, after a long silence, we may sometimes hear the notes of the *Parus ater* renewed.

Seeds as well as insects, &c., form a portion of its food. In a plantation consisting chiefly of the common pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and the alder, I observed for a considerable time in the middle of December, some of these birds accompanied by the gold-crested regulus and lesser redpole (*Fringilla Linaria*). They were all occupied in flying from one alder to another, and were intent on procuring the seed of this tree only. The various attitudes of these three beautiful species were highly interesting, as clinging only to the light bunches of pendent seed, they were not stationary for a single moment. To observe a troop of titmice comprising three or four species, in addition to the gold-crested regulus, and occasionally one or two others of our smallest birds, moving about in company, now pausing as if to display their graceful attitudes on plantations with the *esprit du corps* of one species, has always been to me, but especially in the depth of winter, a source of much attraction: at such times their shrill little notes, evidently more than sight, serve to keep them together. When in Colin Glen on the 19th of November, 1833, I saw, as a matter of course, the gold-crested regulus, the blue and coal titmice in company. I was amused on observing both species of *Parus* cling to the centre of the under side of the leaves of the sycamore (*Acer Pseudo-Platanus*) still attached to the trees, and

describe a circle with their bills by picking with extreme rapidity all around them, during which operation their weight did not bring to the ground a single leaf, though all were "sere and yellow." Mr. Poole remarks that the coal titmouse feeds much in the season on the berries of woodbine, and that he has observed what appeared to be a family of these birds, engaged in carrying the berries one by one to their place of concealment.

About Aberarder, Inverness-shire, this was the only species of titmouse that came under my observation during September, 1842, and it was common in the plantations, especially those of Scotch fir, to which decided preference was shown. Mr. Macgillivray (vol. ii. p. 442) and Sir Wm. Jardine (B. B. vol. ii. p. 172), give very interesting accounts of its habits. That it does not, however, feed exclusively on insects in Ireland,—as the former author believes it to do in Scotland—I have had proof by finding seeds in its stomach. I have also commonly found fragments of stone, though they have not been met with in the birds examined by Mr. Macgillivray.

The crested titmouse (*P. cristatus*) is a British bird confined to Scotland, where it is but little known. Mr. Poole remarks, that its habits do not differ much from those of its congener, the coal titmouse, with which he has seen it associated in the depth of pine forests in Germany.

THE LONG-TAILED TIT.

Parus caudatus, Linn.

Is pretty widely disseminated over the island.

This interesting bird, though not well-known, in consequence of its retired and wooded haunts, has long since been recorded as indigenous to Ireland. It appears in the county histories of Cork (Smith's) and Londonderry, and the Natural History of Dublin: —in the last, Rutty remarks that it "was found in the county in the winter of 1768."

At present, the long-tailed tit is less known in the south than in the north, over which it is diffused, but not plentifully.

When my observations on this species were published in 1838, it had not been met with in the province of Munster, by any of my correspondents resident there, but since that period has been noticed. Its distribution from north to south is now known, as follows:—In the north-west of Donegal, it has been seen; but very rarely.* In Londonderry, the bird is not only said to occur, as already mentioned, but to be more frequent than the common species, the blue titmouse!†—which must be incorrect. In Antrim, it has been once seen at Claggan, and at Portglenone: from the latter place one was sent to Belfast, in January, 1837, as a bird never before observed by persons accustomed to shoot in that neighbourhood; six or seven of them were together: in Shane's-Castle Park I saw a few in May, 1838. Its numbers would seem of late years to have increased considerably throughout the north, where the species occurred only twice to the late Mr. Templeton. Within several miles around Belfast, in Antrim and Down, this bird, for a number of years, has been met with, wherever there is a sufficiently great extent of wood, this being apparently the only essential requisite to its presence. It alike inhabits the plantations of the mountain glen, with its rocks and din of cascades; those around the beautiful seats which adorn the shores of the bay, and those ornamenting the most improved demesnes in the rich and highly cultivated valley of the Lagan. In Tollymore Park (Down), these birds were first observed by the gamekeeper in 1836. Specimens from Fermanagh have come under my inspection. It inhabits the county of Meath; has been seen about Portumna, on the borders of Galway; and is said to breed in the small islands of the Connemara lakes.§ In the neighbourhood of Dublin this bird has come under my own notice, and is considered, by Mr. R. Ball, as not uncommon there; but around Youghal, in the county of Cork—his former place of residence—he never met with it. The species is not uncommon near Cahir, and frequents the woods about Ballibrado,

* Mr. J. V. Stewart. † Sampson's Londonderry.

§ M'Calla.

Tipperary. In 1838, it was first known to visit the neighbourhood of Clonmel.* Mr. Poole mentions this bird as common about Ballitore, county of Kildare, but rare in Wexford, at least about his residence. Mr. Neligan had not (1837) met with it in Kerry. The species may not improbably be found in every county throughout the island possessing abundance of wood.

To meet with a family of these birds is always interesting, but they have particularly attracted my admiration when flitting over the waters of a river, and about the overhanging trees that border it. I have frequently noticed them among alders and birches, and they often appear about hawthorn hedges, in the vicinity of plantations. The first which came within my view excited attention by its peculiar note uttered when stationary, and though different from that of the other titmice, its generic similarity satisfied me that it must proceed from some species of this tribe. Its call, when in motion, is soft, thus differing from the shrill little voices of others of the same genus, with which it seems less to consort, than with the gold-crested regulus. In the middle of March, I noted a couple of them at some little distance from each other, uttering quite different calls, the one being of two or three syllables, the other of several. The beauty of this bird is much enhanced, when its breast exhibits a fine roseate hue. A nest with eggs, taken at Ballydrain, near Belfast, on the 1st of August, 1843, and brought to me, resembled that figured by Mr. Yarrell: it was covered over, or closely spangled, with bits of lichen, and built in the fork of an old apple tree:—at Stranmillis, a few miles distant, one was erected in a cytisus shrub. Mr. Poole has seen the nest both in the hawthorn and the larch: that in the latter tree was affixed to the stem about twelve feet from the ground. A nest from the Phœnix Park, presented to the Natural History Society of Dublin, was described as fixed in the fork of a branch of black-thorn (*Prunus spinosa*), and completely screened from observation by the lichen *Ramalina fastigiata*, which grew profusely on the branches of the thorn. The

* Davis.

lichen however, was not used in the construction of the nest, this being chiefly composed of *Parmeliæ* (*P. saxatilis*, *&c.*), through which *Hypna* and the egg-nests of spiders were delicately interwoven: the interior was lined with a profusion of soft moss and feathers.

A note of May 13, 1832, describes, as an amusing sight, a pair of these birds, seen feeding seven young ones, that having left the nest, were clustered together on the branch of a tree, within the space of about six inches. The manner in which a family of long-tailed titmice crowd together for warmth during snow, and in the cold wintry night, has been well described; (see Habits of Birds, p. 60, and note to p. 171 of White's Selborne, ed. 1837,) but that it is the ordinary habit of the species, and not consequent on the piercing breath of winter, is indicated in the following note, dated, July the 5th, 1833. "Mr. Wm. Sinclaire remarks, that some days ago, he was much entertained by observing a family of about ten or twelve long-tailed titmice going to roost in company, when each individual endeavoured to get as near the middle of the group as possible, and that enviable situation was no sooner attained by a few, than those from the outskirts used all their efforts to insinuate themselves towards the centre, and foiled in this, next exerted their powers to avoid being placed outside—in all respects just the winter practice." A similar proceeding on the part of the gold-crested regulus is described by Mr. Herbert, in a note to White's Selborne (p. 180, ed. 1837). So many as twenty long-tailed titmice have been seen in company about Belfast.

The stomachs of four of these birds killed in January and March, were, (with the exception of two seeds in one of them,) entirely filled with insects, among which the remains of minute coleoptera were in every instance discernible.

M. Temminck describes the female only as having the black streak over the eyes; Mr. Jenyns considers it common to both sexes: in nine specimens of *P. caudatus* now before me, this marking is apparent, but in some individuals is much better defined than in others; in one only of them the sex was observed.

It proved to be a male bird: we may fairly presume that others of the remaining eight individuals were of this sex.

A friend residing in Ayr-shire has frequently seen families of long-tailed titmice on the banks of the Stinchar, and in other wooded parts of that county. At the end of September, 1842, Mr. R. Ball observed about ten or twelve in company, in the wood adjacent to the canal at Fort-Augustus, Inverness-shire. Mr. Macgillivray mentions, that the species has been met with in the adjoining and more northern county of Ross-shire.

THE BEARDED TIT.

Calamophilus biarmicus, Linn. (sp.)
Parus „ „

Is believed to have been once obtained in Ireland.

I have never seen a native individual of this bird, and can only repeat the short notice of it, as Irish, communicated by me to the Zoological Society of London in 1834. "Mr. W. S. Wall, bird-preserver, Dublin, who is very conversant with British birds, assures me, that he received a specimen of this *Parus* from the neighbourhood of the river Shannon a few years since." Zool. Proc., 1834, p. 30. The species was determined from Bewick's characteristic wood-cut. In March, 1833, when I first became acquainted with my informant, he told me of its occurrence four or five years before that period: the bird being only wounded, was kept alive for some time.

This species is permanently resident where it occurs in England, but, according to Yarrell, is not known north of Lincolnshire.

THE PIED WAGTAIL.
Common Wagtail.

Motacilla Yarrellii, Gould.
„ *alba*. *

Is common and resident throughout the island.

We find it in localities of all kinds where water is to be met with, from the iron-bound coast of the ocean and sea-girt isles, to the pettiest streamlet and border of the "green-mantled" pool. The last haunt to be mentioned, though not the least frequented by the bird, is the vicinity of the manure-heap, which, as well as the greater places alluded to, presents its peculiar flies attracted by the oozing liquid. This bird, though said to leave the northern, to winter in the southern, parts of England, is permanently resident in the northern counties of Ireland. One disposition towards a movement may however be witnessed, which is their collecting in the autumn in flocks, commonly consisting of about thirty individuals. I have seen them thus at the end of September, at Massareene Park, on the borders of Lough Neagh, and have observed them come to roost upon the reeds (*Arundo phragmitis*) and the adjacent ground, on the banks of the river Lagan, until after the middle of November; but I am not aware whether the bodies of these birds so congregated ever move southwards. Mr. R. Ball has likewise observed them in flocks about Youghal, in the south of Ireland, during the month of October.

Dr. Farran of Dublin, favours me with the following evident instance of migration:—"Being in the county of Waterford on the 16th of September, 1843, I visited Portlaw, the fine power-loom factory belonging to Malcomson and Co., when Mr. Shaw, one of the partners, related the following singular circumstance, which occurred a few days previous to my arrival:—There is in the pond that supplies the water-wheel, a small island, a few yards from the bank, on which about half a dozen sallow-trees are grow-

* Of British authors prior to 1837.

ing, that have attained a considerable size. These trees were selected by a prodigious number of wagtails for the purpose of roosting, which they did for four or five nights consecutively. Their numbers were so great, and the noise they created so loud as to attract Mr. Shaw's attention, and that of almost all the inhabitants of Portlaw. They weighed down the branches to the surface of the water, and when nearly immersed would rise like a cloud and then alight again : after remaining a few nights they suddenly disappeared. They were the pied wagtail. The birds which were reared in the vicinity of the works did not join the mass, but kept aloof and retired to their usual roosting place. They appeared about the works in the morning as usual—indeed, the day I was there, I saw a few very busy 'fly-catching' on the edge of the cistern placed on the top of the building, which is six stories high." Dr. Farran, at my request, wrote for further information, and received the following from Dr. Martin, dated, Portlaw, Dec. the 3rd, 1843:—"I have made close inquiries relating to the movements of the wagtails, from several of our work-people, remarkable for their sharp observation of the habits of animals, and they all concur in stating the number assembled on the island, to have been enormous, about one or two thousand. Smaller numbers still meet every night and do so during the winter. The men also say that such meetings were never remarked here before last year, but one of them remembers observing a similar assemblage at Loughcrew, in the county of Meath."

Sir W. Jardine* and Mr. Macgillivray,†—who give very full and good descriptions of the habits of the species,—mention its collecting together in flocks, which take their departure even from "the middle and southern parts of Scotland," though some remain throughout the winter; and that again a migratory movement northwards is made very early in spring, when they spread themselves over the whole of the country, and the Outer Hebrides. (Macg.) A few certainly may leave the north of Ireland, but throughout the winter they are numerous : after frost of some

* Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 194. † Vol. ii. p. 230.

continuance at the end of January, 1838, a note reminds me of fifteen seen together at an oozy place, close to the town of Belfast, daily frequented by the species throughout winter; a grey wagtail, and a number of titlarks, being also of the party.

Towards the end of January, the song of the wagtail is frequently heard in the north, and occasionally so late as October: it sometimes sings when on wing. The situations generally known to me as selected for its nest, were on the ground beneath piles of loosely heaped stones, the eggs four in number, and as described by Mr. Selby. At Castle Warren (Cork), it is said to be generally placed among ivy. A nest which I examined, was entirely formed of cow and horse hair, excepting some thread and bits of cloth in its foundation.

Montagu remarks of these birds, that "as the weather becomes severe, they haunt marshes subject to the flow of the tide. In such places on the coast we have seen them in abundance, when none were to be found inland." (Orn. Dict.) In the north of Ireland, they are always to be met with in the interior of the country, and during the most genial seasons of the year frequent the seaside when the tide has ebbed. I have in some localities observed them daily attend upon the flowing tide in autumn, like the dunlin (*Tringa variabilis*), and other true shore birds; and in others, when in flocks, confine themselves, like the rock pipit, to the fucus-covered stones along the margin of the sea. During the breeding season, I have met with them on small and low rocky marine islets. They are said to be as common in the island of Rathlin,* as on the mainland, and to frequent Tory Island, off the north of Donegal.†

The wagtails are very general favourites. It is interesting to observe their confidence in man, which is well shown by their closely following and keeping pace with the plough and harrow, regardless of the loud calling of the driver to his horses, as if knowing that it is not addressed to them. In thus feeding, one manner only of taking their prey is resorted

* Dr. J. D. Marshall. † Mr. Hyndman.

to; but elsewhere, when winged insects are the objects of pursuit, we may see them, not only run, but also leap and fly; in the last, they resemble the spotted fly-catcher, and I have seen them pursue insects through the air as far as that species. When this part is enacted above ponds, the bird is seen to particular advantage. The white feathers of the tail being exhibited in flight, add much to the beauty of this wagtail's appearance. It is amusing to behold what appears to be its playfulness of manner towards other birds, and the reception this meets with. I have seen one fly out to sea after a ring plover (*Charadrius Hiaticula*), and strike it several times, the latter exerting all its powers to avoid the wagtail, as if this species, not more than half its weight, were a bird of prey. Again, when one of these birds and a yellow bunting were feeding near to each other, the wagtail gave chase to the latter, and after taking many turns, through all which they maintained a regular distance of about a foot from each other, they alighted peaceably on the same stone; the chase thus seeming to have been undertaken for mere diversion. On another occasion, I remarked a pair of wagtails pursue, to its great annoyance, a poor bat (*Vespertilio Pipistrellus*) that untowardly appeared during one of the dark days of December (9th, 1832). Some little impertinence had probably been shown by one of these birds to a swallow, which I saw fiercely pursue it uttering the loudest cries all the time: they flew very near to me, the swallow bearing down upon the wagtail and almost touching it, when they disappeared from my sight.

Throughout the month of September, 1842, this species was common among the gravelly beds of rivers, in the district of Aberarder, Inverness-shire. In the latter half of September, 1843, which I spent with a friend living on the banks of the Dhuisk river, in Ayr-shire, they were more common about the dwelling-house, than I had ever before seen them at a house of any kind, several being always perched on the window-sills, tempted doubtless by the flies, which frequent such places. Their unusual numbers may be attributed to the circumstance of the house being situated near a gravelly river.

THE WHITE WAGTAIL.

Motacilla alba, Linn., Gould.
„ „ Yarr.*

Is believed to be at least an occasional visitant.

It is included on the following testimony. In a letter to me from Mr. R. Ball, dated Dublin, June the 19th, 1846, it was stated, that a few days before, when at Roundwood, he had seen a specimen of the true *Motacilla alba*, as distinguished from *M. Yarrellii*. He remarked:—"We watched it for some time, though at a short distance from us, with a small telescope used for such purposes; its beautiful plumage was very distinct from that of the common species, and its habit much more sedate than is usual with wagtails: it 'wagged' but little, and walked about demurely.—I am quite sure that I have often seen the species before." As the bird was not actually obtained, its occurrence would not be inserted here, without my having perfect reliance on the knowledge, and acute observation, of my informant. The preceding note was communicated to the Annals of Natural History, vol. xviii. p. 311 (1846). Mr. R. Chute, of Blennerville, co. Kerry, had written to me in Feb., 1846, that he believed this species was found there.

This wagtail has only for the last few years been known as British, from specimens obtained at Kingsbury, Carlisle, and Falmouth. (Yarr., B. B. i. 404.)

GREY WAGTAIL.

Yellow wagtail (popularly in Ireland).

Motacilla boarula, Linn.

This beautiful and graceful species, though much less common than the pied wagtail, is extensively, but not universally, distributed over Ireland.

About the rocky islets off the coast, where the pied wagtail is

* Brit. Birds, Supp., p. 22, and vol. i. p. 403, 2nd edit.

met with, I have not seen the grey one, and during a week spent at the end of June, 1832, in the wild district of Dunfanaghy, in the north-west of Donegal, where the pied was common, not one of the grey species was observed. Such was also the case in other localities of a similar nature, which I have visited on the northern and western coasts. With respect to Scotland, Mr. Macgillivray,—who gives a very full description of its habits,—observes, that "it is of very rare occurrence to the north of Inverness,* and is not met with in the Outer Hebrides." He notes it, as "generally distributed in the lower and more cultivated parts," vol. ii. p. 240.

The grey wagtail, like the pied, is permanently resident throughout Ireland, but in the north of England is little known, except as a summer visitant, and in the south,† as a winter one; as such only it was noticed by White at Selborne, though now mentioned, as occasionally breeding there.‡ For many years, I have remarked its presence during every winter in the counties of Down and Antrim, and about the mountain rivulets, as well as those adjacent to the sea. When frost and snow have driven the woodcocks from the mountain heaths to the covers, and the snipes from the marshes to the unfrozen springs, I have observed the grey wagtail in its summer haunts, about the ponds at the mountainous locality of Wolf-hill. At this season, and late in the autumn, it is occasionally seen in places of a very different character—in the extensive tan-yards, &c., of Belfast. The curator of the museum in this town informs me, that during the winter of 1843–44 (his own first season there) a pair of these birds regularly frequented the yard, and that they disappeared at the end of March, doubtless with a view to country quarters for the summer. Towards the end of August, a pair re-appeared, which, from their

* It was occasionally seen about the door of my friend's shooting lodge at Aberarder, sixteen miles south of Inverness, during the month of September, 1842. I have remarked it in autumn, frequenting the rivulets of Ayr-shire, but perhaps less commonly than about Belfast.

† On August 28th, I saw it in the gravelly bed of the river, at Dôle, in France; in the third week of March at Ogley Pool, North Wales.

‡ Yarr. B. B. vol. i. p. 372.

familiarity and tameness, were supposed to be the same, and were seen every day from this time until the end of winter. They were occasionally half a dozen times, during a day, in the yard; where, and in the neighbouring tan-yards, they literally "picked up" an honest livelihood. The museum itself has been entered by one of them, which was found perching on the bannisters. Since the first-mentioned period to the present—September 13th, 1848—when their first appearance for the season was observed, they have been regular autumnal and winter visitants. The pied wagtail likewise frequents these yards. Mr. Poole correctly remarks that the species under consideration is very partial, especially in winter, to the vicinity of dunghills; and will sometimes pick food while on wing from the surface of the water.

The situations generally selected for the nest are holes in walls, the preference being given to those of bridges, about mill-wheels, or otherwise contiguous to water. In the romantic glens of the Belfast mountains they also build, and for this purpose a pair generally resorts to a fissure of the rock, beside a picturesque cascade at "the Falls," just such a place as would be chosen by the water-ouzel. On the 18th of March a pair of grey wagtails, "with black patch on throat," have been noted, apparently contemplating nidification, at Wolf-hill, by minutely examining their former breeding haunts; and on the 12th of May, the young of the first brood were seen on wing, though still requiring their parents' aid to feed them: occasionally there is a second brood. The nest is generally formed of grasses or other delicate plants, and lined with horse-hair. It is singular, that they generally manage to pick up enough of this last material for lining: four nests at Wolf-hill in one season were all lined with it; the eggs were usually four in number, and during incubation the beautiful and innocent bird would admit of a close approach. I have invariably remarked the female, as well as the male, to possess the black mark on the throat in the nuptial season, but the colour was of a lighter shade. After Montagu and Selby it may seem unnecessary to allude to this, but Temminck's having described it as characteristic of the male only, has induced the observation. Throughout the winter

the grey wagtails generally keep in pairs; in autumn only have I seen a whole family, and never more together. They may then be seen roosting in company at the base of trees or underwood overhanging the water.

Their prey is taken by the different methods described in the notice of the pied wagtail. About the head of mountain springs, I have frequently observed the attractive *M. boarula,* but knew not the object of pursuit in these interesting spots, until the examination of the stomach of one in the month of December, proved it, at least in one instance, to have been the minute river limpet, (*Ancylus fluviatilis,*) of which there were many specimens, together with a few fragments of stone. Of three others killed in localities of a different nature, one contained a small fresh-water shell, *Limnæus fossarius*; and the others the remains of insects, among which some elytra of *Coleoptera* were apparent.

THE YELLOW WAGTAIL.

Ray's Wagtail.

Motacilla flava, Will., Ray.

Can only be announced as a summer visitant to one locality; and as of occasional and rare occurrence elsewhere.*

Mr. Templeton has remarked that it is rare, "appearing more commonly about Lough Neagh than elsewhere," an observation, which, though correct, requires explanation to prevent an erroneous inference. About the lake generally, it is not common, nor have I been able, during frequent visits to various parts of its shores, ever to meet with the species, except on one occasion. This was on the 3rd of August, 1846, when visiting its limited haunt at the north-west extremity of this great sheet of water, about Toome. Several were then seen at the side of the river Bann, adjoining Toome bridge; and on the following day, ten (old and young) appeared at the margin of the lake below the

† It is marked resident and common in the list of the birds of Donegal, published in Loudon's Magazine of Natural History, vol. v. p. 582, but *M. boarula,* commonly called yellow wagtail in Ireland, must be meant.

bridge. They admitted of a near approach, and both with the naked eye and through a telescope, I saw that they were the true *M. flava*. They seemed to take the place of the grey wagtail (*M. boarula*) here, as during three days spent in the district, I did not, though looking particularly for them, see one of this species:—such however, may have been accidental. The pied wagtail (*M. Yarrellii*) is remarkably abundant about Toome. Having known the *M. flava* to be seen here in different years—perhaps forty have elapsed since Mr. Templeton observed it—I conclude that the bird is an annual visitant. I cannot but imagine that it will yet be found regularly at some other favourite localities in the island.

The observations of ornithologists in various parts of the country, show that it is generally a rare species. To myself, it has occurred but once in a wild state, except about Toome, on the 24th of June, 1832. In that instance, one was seen in a turf-bog on the confines of the county of Donegal, a few miles from the city of Londonderry. It has but once been met with by Wm. Sinclaire, Esq., on the 28th of April, 1833, when a single individual appeared, and on that day only, in an oat-field at the Falls. One, shot at Finglass, near Dublin, about the 20th of April, 1835, has come under my notice in the collection of T. W. Warren, Esq. A second specimen, which I have seen at Dublin, was stated to have been shot in the vicinity of the custom-house there, in 1837. The species is unknown to my correspondents as visiting the southern counties.

On the 8th of April, 1841, an old male bird shot near Belfast, came into my possession. A good ornithologist is certain that two wagtails, seen at the shore of the bay, near that town, on the 8th of August, 1846, were of this species. About the 1st of May, 1847, three were procured between Portadown and Verner's bridge, in the county of Armagh, by the Rev. G. Robinson.

In the month of July, I have remarked this wagtail at the lakes of Hawes-water and Windermere, in England.

About forty miles east of Malta, on the 22nd of April, 1841, two of these birds flew on board H.M.S. Beacon—one of them

into our cabin, and remained in the vessel all day. They were very tame; and it was amusing to see them fly-catching on the deck, where they appeared to great advantage, and met with considerable success. They looked most ludicrous, poking out the neck, opening wide the bill, and then, with such gestures duly enacted, making the unerring dart at the victim. These two individuals, together with the following, were noticed in the Annals of Natural History, vol. viii. p. 125, *et seq.*, as females of *M. neglecta*, but they were set down at the time as *M. flava*, and their characters noted. On comparing them with Yarrell's description of the female *M. neglecta*, it is evident they could not have of been that species, as indeed a comparison of actual specimens has further proved.

On the 23rd of April two alighted, and remained for some time; we were then about eighty miles N.E. of Malta. On the 24th, when not very distant from the same place, several of these birds arrived; one of them entered the cabin very boldly, and entertained us much by its familiarity. Persons passing in or out of the room did not for a moment deter it from fly-catching, which was accomplished by running, leaping, or taking short flights at its prey; this bird even alighted on the persons present, and picked flies off their clothes.

The other wagtails which came on board were the blue or grey-headed species, *M. neglecta*. The first occurred on the 16th of April, on our passage from Marseilles to Malta in the French steam-packet, when two male birds alighted, about twenty miles southward of the most southern point of Italy; they were very tame, and remained in the vessel for half an hour. April 26th, when about eighty miles from Zante, and 130 from Navarino, two or three arrived; and one did so on the following day, when the vessel was about forty-five miles from Zante, and sixty, west of the Morea.

This species has not yet been added to the Irish fauna. Several individuals have been obtained in various parts of England, and two are said to have been procured in Scotland; but Mr. Macgillivray is of opinion that they were instead *M. flava* or *M. Rayi*.

THE TREE PIPIT.

Anthus arboreus, Bechst.
Alauda trivialis, Linn.
„ *minor,* Lath.

Is not satisfactorily known as an Irish species.

On April 12th, 1827, I for some time gave attention to a bird at "the Falls," that from general appearance, manner of singing, &c., I concluded must be of this species, as described by Mr. Selby. One or two ornithological friends likewise, have similarly observed pipits in the neighbourhood of Belfast, which they presumed to be the *A. arboreus,* but specimens have not been obtained for examination. It is believed to have bred about Ballitore, county of Kildare, * and at Raheny near Dublin; in the latter locality in the summer of 1847, but could not be met with in 1848.†

Possibly the tree pipit may be alluded to in the following passage from Smith's History of Cork, published in 1774 (p. 338, 2nd edit.):—"The *Alauda pratorum,* Aldrov., or titlark, which is in England a bird of passage, is a stranger to Ireland. Dr. Rutty informs me that an eminent bird-catcher is now introducing them as a novelty in Dublin, being in much esteem for their sweet note. Another species, called the pippit or *Alauda minor,* whose legs are yellow, and a smaller kind of lark, is a constant attendant to the cuckoo, as a good bird-catcher assures us."

The tree pipit is a regular summer visitant to England and Wales, but would seem not to be generally diffused over those countries. The first heard of by Mr. Macgillivray, as met with in Scotland, was killed in 1833, and two others in addition to it, are all known to that author to have occurred there (vol. ii. p. 190). Sir Wm. Jardine merely notices its appearance "in the middle and northern parts of Scotland." (B. B. vol. ii. p. 206.)

* Mr. R. Davis. † M. R. J. Montgomery.

THE MEADOW PIPIT.

Titlark. Moss-cheeper.*

Anthus pratensis, Linn. (sp.)
Alauda „ „

Is very common from meadows and bogs at the sea-side, to humid mountain tracts of the greatest elevation.

It frequents the shore at all seasons. Dry sand-hills bordering the sea† or the ocean, are much frequented by this species in summer, not for their own sake, but for the little damp or marshy hollows among them, in which the titlark especially delights. It is permanently resident, but suffers much from frost and snow, and during such times is occasionally driven for food to the streets of Belfast;—even after two nights of frost has been noticed there. One of these birds feigned being wounded for the purpose of withdrawing the attention of my informant from its nest. Mr. J. R. Garrett has frequently found the nest of the meadow pipit on the banks of water-courses and drains, as well as on the level ground, in fields. One which was known to him at the side of a drain, was discovered by some bird-nesting boys, who pulled the grass away that concealed it. On visiting the nest the next day, he observed a quantity of withered grass laid regularly across; having removed the grass, which from its contrast in colour with the surrounding herbage, was supposed to have been placed here as a mark by the boys, the bird flew off. The grass was found similarly placed on the following day, and he perceived a small aperture beneath it, by which the bird took its departure, thus indicating that the screen which harmonized so ill with the surrounding verdure had been brought there by the bird itself.‡

* The bird is commonly called "moss cheeper" in the north; by the name of "wekeên" it is known in Kerry (Neligan).

† I was much amused by seeing one walk deliberately into the sea, and perform a thorough ablution.

‡ A similar fact with regard to another species, is recorded in the following words, in Hewitson's Illustrations of the Eggs of British Birds. "Mr. Blyth mentions a remarkable instance in which the skylark—its nest being laid open by the scythe—constructed over it a canopy of dry grass to afford it the protection and conceal-

The eggs in the same nest vary in colour occasionally, some being greatly darker than others. The site of a nest seen by my informant on the 15th of July, 1846, when the young were coming forward, was the end of a plank forming part of a pile of timber, built against the yard wall of a mill, at the outskirts of Belfast. The pied wagtail built that season among some timber in the same yard. The song of the titlark has rarely been heard about Belfast before March, but, in a mild season (1828), was so, as early as the 4th of February. Mr. Poole, writing from the county of Wexford, observes that he has known this species sing soon after the middle of March, and commence nest-building in the first week of April; the nest being composed of dry grasses, with some few black horse-hairs for lining.*

The stomach of one of these birds, examined by me in December, was chiefly filled with minute coleopterous insects, but contained also worms, minute fragments of brick, and two perfect specimens of the shell *Bulimus lubricus*; another was filled with oats and barley; a third, with seeds and insect larvæ.

The titlark has been already noticed as frequenting mountain tracts of the very greatest elevation in Ireland;—in the summer and autumn it has occurred to me on very lofty summits in Scotland. About the top of Ben Lomond it was the only bird seen; and frequented the almost equally high mountains at Aberarder, Inverness-shire.† I have remarked it in summer, to be common—as may be expected—in the low grounds of Holland.

ment which the long grass amongst which it was snugly sheltered, had previously afforded." p. 138 (1846).

* *Belfast, September the 28th*, 1848.—A beautiful variety of the titlark came under my notice. It was shot in a wild state, and sent to a taxidermist to preserve. More than one half of its plumage was pure white. The top of the head and upper portion were beautiful rich primrose-yellow, which colour, also, broadly edged the white feathers of the back, and those of the upper surface of the wings and tail. The throat and under side of the neck, were pure white. One wing was very handsome, owing to the first four quills being pure white, the next four, of the usual dark colour, and the several succeeding them, pure white. As usual in such cases, the feathers of the opposite wing, were not similarly marked. One half of the tail-feathers were wholly white, with the exception, as in the quills, of being broadly edged with primrose-yellow. The only ordinary plumage remaining, except a few odd feathers, was on the belly, where the deep buff, with its brownish markings appeared. The bill and legs were paler in hue than usual.

† When ascending Snowdon, in the summer of 1835, neither this nor any other bird appeared towards the summit.

THE ROCK PIPIT.

Rock-Lark. Field-lark, of Bewick.

Anthus petrosus, Mont. (sp.*)
„ *aquaticus*, Bechst.
Alauda obscura, Gmel.

Inhabits the sea-coasts throughout the year,

And has on those of the north, east, west, and south, commonly occurred to me. Although this species does not appear in Mr. Templeton's published Catalogue of Irish Vertebrata,† I find by reference to his MS. that he was acquainted with it. Under the name of *Alauda petrosa*, he remarked, "common about the rocks, on the shore." It is nowhere more plentiful than about the rocky marine islets, of which Tory, off the north of Donegal,‡ and the south islands of Arran (off the bay of Galway), by reason of their extreme position, may be particularized.

With the following observations of Montagu, my own entirely agree. He remarks that the rock pipit "seems wholly confined to the neighbourhood of the sea, and is never found, even in winter, more remote than the contiguous marshes within the occasional influx of the tide, depending chiefly on marine insects for its subsistence, and has never been observed to be gregarious." (Art. Rock Lark in Orn. Dict.) Mr. Selby has observed it to be "strictly confined to the rocky and abrupt shores;" (Ill. Brit. Orn., vol. i. p. 259.) but close to the town of Belfast, a coast of the very opposite character is frequented by this bird. On the lowest and most oozy part of the beach, it may always be seen about the *rejectamenta* of the tide, consisting almost wholly of the *Zostera marina*, the accumulated masses of which form the chief attraction. To stony embankments, piers, and similar erections, it

* This species is named *Alauda petrosa*, and rock lark by Montagu, in a paper published in the 4th vol. of the Linnæan Transactions, entitled "Descriptions of three rare species of British Birds." The only synonyms there referred to are *Alauda obscura*, Latham, and dusky lark, Lewin. The two other species are the wood wren, *Sylvia sylvicola*, and the Phayrelarn sandpiper, *Tringa nigricans*. This note is introduced here, in consequence of the paper being referred to in different works, without the author's name being mentioned.

† Mag. Nat. Hist. vol. i., new series.

‡ Several observed here in Aug. 1845, by Mr. Hyndman.

is likewise partial, as it is in Holland, according to Temminck. In my previous publication on this species (Ann. Nat. Hist. vol. i. 1838), attention was called to the very different nature of the localities stated by this author to be frequented by it, and I felt certain that in connection with some of them, another species must be meant. The subsequent publication of the fourth part of his admirable "Manuel," proved this view to be correct, and that two species had been confounded. The name *Anthus aquaticus*, Bechst. (p. 623) he now applies to the species inhabiting the south of Europe, and "*Ant. obscurus*, Temm." (p. 628) to our bird, which frequents the borders of the sea.

In pursuit of food, we find most of the true shore birds (*Grallatores*) frequenting the bare beach, whether oozy, gravelly, or sandy; but the rock pipit generally seeks its sustenance, either on the masses of seaweed, which when growing are exposed at ebb-tide, or on those which have been cast ashore. A favourite position is on large *fuci*-covered stones left dry between tide-marks. When looking for the nests of terns on the 13th of June, upon the Mew Island, off the coast of Down, where the rock pipit is common, I observed one of its nests. This was wholly composed of fine grasses, which also served for lining, and was placed on the ground, at the base of a narrow ledge of rock. It contained three eggs, well incubated, which were greenish white, closely and pretty uniformly speckled all over with pale brown. When visiting several of the islands of Strangford Lough on the 22nd of June, 1846, rock pipits were found numerous on them. Several of their nests were observed, from all of which, both eggs and young were gone. They were placed far in, beneath the shelter of projecting stones, and formed simply of the dried grasses which had grown there; no other material was used, even for lining. The food observed in one which was shot consisted of several small univalve shells (*Littorinæ*), in addition to Coleopterous insects. The stomachs of three killed, on the shore of Strangford Lough, in the first week of March, 1847, were entirely filled with minute Crustacea (*Gammari*).

Mr. Poole, writing of the county of Wexford, remarks that the

nest is generally on the slope of a grassy bank, or in cliffs at no great height above the sea, is composed of dry grass-stalks, and lined with a few black horse-hairs. He has found nests containing eggs, and others having young on the 7th of May:—a bird which he startled from her nest, feigned being hurt, evidently to draw his attention thence to herself.

At the Giant's Causeway, where these birds are particularly numerous, I have been much interested, in the middle of June, by observing them ascend gradually to a great height in the air, uttering continuously "cheep-cheep" between each beat of the wings, and then descend in perfect silence as quickly, and at about the same angle, perhaps fifty degrees. The descent was accomplished with motionless wing, their little breasts being shot out like puff-balls. From my always seeing a pair of these birds about the wall at the neighbouring salmon-cuts (Bush-foot), I had no doubt of their having a nest in some of its apertures.

I have remarked this species to be as common on the coasts of Wigton-shire and Ayrshire, as in Ireland.

Richard's Pipit (*Anthus Richardi*), which has on very few occasions been obtained in England, has not been seen in Scotland (Jard.: Macg.) or Ireland.

THE BOHEMIAN WAX-WING.

Waxen Chatterer.

Bombycilla garrula, Linn, (sp.)
Ampelis garrulus, „

Is an occasional, but rare, winter visitant.

Mr. Templeton has said of this bird: "Sometimes seen about Belfast, but more common in Tullamore Park, county Down; has been several times* shot in the county of Derry;" Charlesworth's Mag. Nat. Hist., vol. i. p. 405. By a veteran sporting friend, the wax-wing has twice been met with in the neighbourhood of Belfast, and in both instances in wooded glens within the district of the Falls:—in the lower part of Colin glen, and at Milltown. One

* "Once" instead of "several times," in Mr. Templeton's MS.

of these birds was shot about thirty years ago, and the other, considerably before that time, when severe frost and snow prevailed. About the year 1820, one was killed at Castle Martyr, county of Cork.* "In the winter of 1822–23, a specimen of the *Bombycilla Bohemica*, Briss., was found dead in the woods of Burton Hall, in the county of Carlow." Zool. Journ., vol. i. p. 590. This note was contributed by Mr. Vigors, who informed me in November, 1839, that since the winter of 1822–3, chatterers had been obtained in three different years on the mountains, between the counties of Carlow and Wexford. A specimen was procured in the Castlereagh hills, county of Down, about the winter of 1825–26. Dr. J. D. Marshall has noticed a male bird which was shot in the neighbourhood of Dublin, in January, 1829;† and in this, or the following winter, another was killed at Ardtane, in that quarter. In the Belfast News-letter of Dec. 20, 1831,‡ the following paragraph appeared:—"In the early part of last month a beautiful specimen of the Bohemian wax-wing (*Bombycilla Bohemica*, Briss.), was shot in Newtownlimavady. It was perched upon a rowan tree in a garden, and seemed busily employed in picking off the berries; many of them were found in its craw when it was opened. It is preserved in the collection of Dr. Tyler of Newtownlimavady." On Feb. the 6th, 1835, an extremely beautiful individual of this species, was shot in a garden at Ballymacarrett, in the suburbs of Belfast, and on the following day, another was seen at the same place. The former, which came under my inspection, proved on dissection to be a female; its stomach, which I did not examine until the 10th, four days after death, was entirely filled with the haws of the white-thorn (*Cratægus Oxyacantha*), which exhaled an odour as fresh, as if just plucked from the tree. Each wing exhibited six plumelets, with their scarlet wax-like adornments; some authors have described the female as wanting these altogether, and the greatest number I have seen attributed to her, are four or five. (Temm.) In this or the following winter, a specimen was ob-

* Mr. R. Ball. † Mag. N. H. ii. 394.

‡ Two were killed in this month in the north of England. Phil. Mag., 1832, p. 84.

tained at Portmarnock: it is preserved in Mr. T. W. Warren's collection.

In a few other instances, but without particulars, I have had reports of the wax-wing's occurrence in Ireland. In all the years of its visits to this island, positively known, it has been met with in England likewise. It appears there as with us, only at rare and uncertain intervals.

THE SKYLARK.

Common Lark.

Alauda arvensis, Linn.

Is common throughout Ireland,

And partial, according to my observation, to marine islets off various parts of the coast. To judge from the British works in which this bird is treated of, its song, re-commenced in the autumn, would seem to be continued longer into the winter in this island than elsewhere;—a result attributable to the humidity and mildness of the climate. It may be heard as frequently in fine bright days during the month of October, even in the bird's most elevated haunts in the mountain pastures about Belfast, as at any other season. One note may be given on this subject; *November the 7th*, 1835:—"I never heard more skylarks singing at any period of the year, than in the early part of this day, in the high pastures bounded by the heath in the Belfast mountains, at an elevation of about 1000 feet above the sea. The day was fine and bright; the ground very wet from continued rain throughout the days and nights of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, early part of the 5th, and occasionally since, until this morning." Montagu remarks, that this bird is "rarely seen on the extended moors at a distance from arable land," and later British authors repeat the observation. The wild mountain pasture, however, is in Ireland a favourite abode, and there, as mentioned in the following note, the delightful voice of the skylark may occasionally be heard at a rather late hour, mingling with the bleating of the snipe:—*June*

the 22nd, 1840. "At half-past seven o'clock this evening, when on the highest part of the old road from Belfast to Crumlin, perhaps 850 feet above the sea, larks were busily engaged singing on every side, at the same time that snipes (*Scolopax Gallinago*) were bleating, and giving utterance to their other calls. The mingling of the notes of the two species, so very dissimilar, had a singular but most pleasing effect." The skylark is generally noticed by authors as singing only when on wing; yet it not very unfrequently pours forth its song from the ground, and when perched on furze or whins, &c. Mr. Poole remarks, that the skylark occasionally mounts up to sing during rain, but does not remain long, merely ascending and quickly descending again: nests are noted by him as containing young birds in the middle of April, and which were fledged by the 1st of May. An observant friend has on different occasions known several circular holes to be made by pairs of these birds, before fixing upon one for their nest.

In very cold winters, our indigenous larks congregate in large flocks, which remain with us unless the weather become extraordinarily severe, when they move more or less southward. Even when the winter is mild in the north of Ireland, these birds generally migrate hither from Scotland, in small or moderate flocks, and have repeatedly been seen crossing the Channel by my friend Capt. Fayrer, R.N., during the several years that he commanded the mail steam-packet, which plied between Portpatrick and Donaghadee.* Although the autumn of the year 1832 had been very fine and mild, I saw so early as the 17th of October, a very large flock of larks, which had doubtless migrated to this country. In the winter of 1837–38, larks remained in flocks until a late period—on the 24th of March I remarked not less than sixty congregated.

The skylark occasionally exhibits variety in its plumage, though less frequently than some others of our small birds. The collec-

* In the "Annual Register" under date of *January the 10th,* 1814, it is stated, that "The *Hillsborough* Packet, on the passage from Portpatrick to Donaghadee, was literally covered, on the rigging and deck, by a flock of larks: they had taken their departure from some place at or near Portpatrick, and in order to have a rest by the way, swarmed about the packet. So soon as they got near shore, they made a rapid flight for the land."

tion of my friend Wm. Sinclaire, Esq., contained one of a black colour, which was shot in a wild state among a flock, as was a pure white one—a true albino, with red eyes—which is in the collection of J. V. Stewart, Esq. One, with primaries, secondaries and tail, snowy white, and, like the others, shot in a wild state, has come under my notice. Birds are of course more subject to melanism when caged, than in a state of nature. A young male skylark of 1843, kept by Mr. Darragh, curator of the Belfast Museum, changed at the autumnal moult of 1845 to black, which colour was assumed by its entire plumage excepting on the upper portion of the neck, where on close examination, a little very dark-brown might be observed. This bird was fed on bread, potatoes, groats, and hemp-seed. Death ensued soon after the black plumage was exhibited. It panted much, as if for want of breath, and on dissection after death, a fleshy tubercle was found *outside* the lower portion of the windpipe. In Dec., 1846, Mr. Darragh received a black lark to preserve, which had been three years in the possession of the person with whom it died, during the one half of which period the plumage had been black. A considerable portion of its food during the whole time was hemp-seed. Its skull was remarked to be extremely thin, so much so, as to be compared to silk-paper. This was likewise the case in another black lark, which he set up. Both birds were males and excellent singers. The claws of caged larks kept by him have grown to the length of two inches. A lark which had its liberty within the greenhouse of a relative, lived eight years there, and was eventually lost by effecting its escape.

Nowhere perhaps is the skylark more sought for as a caged-bird than in Ireland, and the song given forth "right merrilie" from the little patch of green-sward within its prison, seems to imply that the bird bears confinement well. But it is always with regret that we see the lark, whose nature is to pierce the clouds when singing, so circumscribed, and we cannot but wish for its own sake that it had the freedom of "fresh fields and pastures new;" yet we do not, like a class of persons in the world, *think only of the skylark*. To the poor artisan in the town, this bird is

of great service by enlivening him with its song, associated with which in his mind are doubtless scenes in the country, the love of which is instinctive to the human breast. The lark, too, is generally treated with affectionate care, and the first walk of its master in the very early morning, before the day's task begins, has for its object, the providing of a "fresh sod" for his pet bird.

The following anecdote, communicated by my late venerable friend, Dr. M'Donnell of Belfast, shows the high value once set upon a skylark:—"A rather poor chandler in Belfast, called Huggart, had a lark remarkable for its song. Mr. Hull, a dancing-master and great bird-fancier, going into his shop one day, said, he came to purchase his bird. 'Indeed,' replied the other, 'I do not think, Mr. Hull, you are likely to get home *that* bird, which delights all my neighbours as well as myself.' 'Well, I think I am,' was the reply: 'here are five guineas for it.' The sum was instantly refused; when ten guineas were offered, but also rejected. He was then told, 'It is now the the fair-day, and the market full of cattle; go and purchase the best cow there, and I shall pay for her.' But Huggart still declined, and kept his lark."

When looking at the great quantity of wheatears and larks from different parts of England, exposed in their respective seasons in the shops of the London poulterers and game-dealers, I could not but think how much better small birds are treated in Ireland, than they are even in England. The indiscriminate butchery of species in France, Italy, and other continental countries, is shocking. True, in the south of Ireland, there is the silly hunting of the wren on one or two holidays, but even this has lately been interdicted, and to his credit be it mentioned, by Mr. Richard Dowden, when Mayor of Cork.

It is common for skylarks, as remarked by Sir Wm. Jardine, to "bask in the sun and dust themselves, like the Rasores:"* as, may be added, sparrows also frequently do. The stomachs of several larks which came under my examination, especially in winter, contained grains of wheat, seeds, and the remains of other vegetable matter, with an occasional insect-larva: they

* Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 325.

all exhibited fragments of stone. The occasional flying of this species to man, for protection from birds of prey, is noticed under sparrow-hawk. The skylark is most eloquently descanted on in the "Recreations of Christopher North," vol. iii. p. 21.

Over the greater portion of Europe the *Alauda arvensis* is common. The localities most distant from the British islands in which this bird has come under my own observation, were the Morea, and about Smyrna, where it was seen in April and May.

THE CRESTED LARK.

Alauda cristata, Linn.

Is said to have been once obtained in Ireland.

A description and figure of the bird which appeared in the Dublin Penny Journal of February the 27th, 1836 (vol. iv. p. 276.), contains all that is known of it. The writer, who signs "J. W. R.," announces the bird under the name of *Alauda cristata*, and states that he killed one near Taney, a few weeks before.

Mr. Yarrell informs us, in the second edition of his British Birds. (vol. i. p. 456), that since the publication of the preceding notice, a crested lark has been killed in Sussex: the only one known to have occurred in Great Britain. Major Walker, in a letter to me, written in June, 1846, from The Lodge, Kyle, co. Wexford, remarked, that he had "met with the crested lark in great numbers in Hungary, almost always in the villages and towns, rooting in the mud. Their German name is koth-lerche or mud-lark. Yarrell's figure is unfortunately from a dead bird, and so loses its resemblance to the living, in which the crest is always borne erect, except when spreading its wings to fly. It is so large that the bird attracts attention, and I for a long time tried to shoot one, but in vain, as, although familiar as sparrows, they were hardly to be met with except in towns, where I would not fire." The same gentleman subsequently remarked, that as soon as the first snow fell in the north of France, in the winter of

1846–47, the whole coast was covered with these birds. The distance thence to England being so short, he is surprised they are not occasionally common in the latter country. But he is certain that they could not escape notice, owing to the "constantly upright position of the crest."

A specimen of this bird shot in the island of Paros, in June, 1841, came under my inspection. *Alaudæ* of some kind flew on board H.M.S. Beacon, on the 25th and 26th of April, 1841, between Malta and the Morea, but none of them being taken, the species cannot be announced with certainty. For the same reason, the species, or even genus of several *Alaudæ* or *Anthi*, which we saw near the summit of the highest mountain in the island of Syra, on the 7th of May, could not be positively told. They were similar in size to the titlark (*Anthus pratensis*), but of a lighter colour on the under plumage: legs flesh-colour. The beautiful pied wheatear, as already noticed, was in the same locality.

Very few examples of the Shore Lark, *Alauda alpestris*, have been obtained in England: it has not yet been observed in Scotland (Jard. and Macg.) or Ireland. The Short-toed Lark, *Alauda brachydactyla*, is only known as British, from a specimen taken near Shrewsbury. (Yarr.)

THE WOODLARK.

Alauda arborea, Linn.

Is a resident, but very local species,

And one of those unobtrusive birds, little known except to the lover of nature, by whom it is perhaps valued the more on that account. It is not under any circumstances to be met with in flocks like the skylark. So very choice is the woodlark in the place of its abode, as to be singularly local. In the counties of Down and Antrim, it frequents districts where the soil is warm, the country well cultivated and wooded, or scenery, which, like its song, is of a sweet, soft character;—cold clay districts, though equally improved and sheltered, cannot, so far as known to me, claim it for

a tenant. In its favourite localities here, the woodlark may be heard singing almost daily, (chiefly in the morning,) when the weather is fine, from September till June. In the counties named, it is not very uncommon in the warm sandy district of Malone; is occasionally heard about the Down shore of Belfast bay, and on the sides of the Castlereagh hills; about Ballynahinch; Lord Londonderry's deer-park in the Ards; Rosstrevor, &c.* This species is enumerated as one of the birds of Dublin, in Rutty's Natural History of that county, and has a similar place in Smith's History of Cork. Mr. R. Ball informs me, that in the latter county it is not unfrequent, and being much prized for its song, is greatly sought after by bird-catchers. It is found about Waterford.† A friend living near Belfast kept woodlarks for a year or more in his aviary, in company with other birds, but they never sang.

The woodlark would seem to be only partially distributed in England. Mr. Yarrell mentions the counties in which it is known to occur, but in one which is not named—Oxfordshire—I met with two or three of them in June, 1828, in the demesne at Blenheim, the magnificent seat of the Duke of Marlborough. To Sir Wm. Jardine or Mr. Macgillivray, it is not known as a Scottish bird, but according to Mr. Heysham of Carlisle, is occasionally taken by bird-catchers in the vicinity of Dumfries.‡

THE SNOW BUNTING.

Tawny Bunting. Mountain Bunting. §

Plectrophanes nivalis, Linn. (sp.)

Emberiza „ „

Is a regular autumnal migrant to the more northern parts of Ireland.

Towards the south, this bird becomes gradually scarcer, and in its extreme portions,—although the highest mountains in the

* The Rev. G. Robinson, writing from Parkview, Tandragee (co. Armagh), on the 13th of October, 1848, stated, that two pair had frequented the neighbourhood of his house for the preceding fortnight.

† Burkitt. ‡ Yarr. Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 461, 2nd edit.

§ These two names are applied to females and young males, the plumage of which differs much from that of the adult male.

island are situated there,—can only be called a rare and occasional visitant. Its numbers are stated similarly to decrease from the north to the south of England. The island of Achil is said to be regularly visited by the snow-bunting;* and small flocks are reported as frequent in Connemara in very severe winters.† In a catalogue of the birds of the south, kindly drawn up for my use some years ago, by Dr. Harvey of Cork, the snow-bunting was noticed merely as having been met with at Dunscombe wood, near that city. In the Fauna of Cork since published (1844), he states that it is not very uncommon, in immature plumage, in winter: but one adult bird had been seen by him. In a communication made to me in 1841, by Dr. Burkitt of Waterford, the species was noticed as visiting that neighbourhood only in January, 1832. In 1837, I was informed by Mr. T. F. Neligan, that he had never met with it in Kerry; but in the winters of 1840–41, and 1842–43, Mr. R. Chute became aware of its visiting different parts of that county. All that can be said of it by my correspondents in Tipperary and Wexford is, that one was shot on a mountain to the south of Clonmel on the 25th of Dec., 1841, at which time four or five more were seen;‡ and that the species was first observed in the latter county in the winter of 1846–47.§

The snow-bunting is truly a most attractive bird, not only from its pleasing form and finely-varied plumage, but as one of the very few species met with in the depth of winter on the mountain-top, where, flitting overhead, uttering its pleasingly wild chirp, the far-distant region within the arctic circle, whence it may have come, is brought before the mind. Its earliest appearance about Belfast noted by me, is the middle of October, 1831 and 1844, and the 23rd of that month, in 1833. At the end of October, it has been killed on the shore of Dublin bay. The latest date noted of its remaining about Belfast is the 21st of March, 1832.

Although their haunts, in mild weather, are chiefly the mountain-tops, one night's severe frost has been known to drive them to the nearest roads for food: a friend has seen them here in frosty morn-

* Dr. W. R. Wilde. † M'Calla. ‡ Mr. Davis. § Mr. Poole.

ings for a mile along the highest part of a road crossing the Belfast mountains, picking like sparrows at the oats in the horse-dung. When there is neither frost nor snow, they may be met with occasionally in the lower grounds and on the sea-shore; to the latter they are obliged to resort when the weather sets in very severe. During the great snow-storm, early in March, 1827, flocks appeared in the outskirts of the town of Belfast; and such numbers were killed on the sea-shore in its vicinity, that they were purchased by Mr. Sinclaire, as the cheapest food he could procure for his trained peregrine falcons. Although of regular passage to the Belfast range of mountains, snow-buntings are much more numerous in other, and less frequented, mountainous districts in the county of Antrim, as about Newtown-Crommelin and Clough. At the former of these places, where the Rev. G. M. Black was several years resident, he always observed them during the winter in very large flocks, in which not more than one in twenty were adult individuals. From the other locality, which is in the same district, examples have been brought to me by Mr. J. R. Garrett, who also supplied the following note. *January the 4th*, 1834:—"When shooting to-day about two miles from Clough, I met with an immense flock of snow-buntings, out of which I killed thirty at one discharge, as they flew past me. Their call resembled the chirping of the grey-linnet, and the number of wings made a considerable noise, as the flock, consisting of several hundreds, swept by: some were nearly white, and others of a dark-brown colour." In any of the flocks which have come under my own observation, the adult males bore only a small proportion to the females and immature birds; but, except in very small flocks, they were always present throughout the winter.* This species is mentioned under the name of cherry-chirper!, in Rutty's Natural History of Dublin, as "found on the strand in December, 1747, and kept in a cage until December, 1748, and fed with oats, hemp-seed, and cuttlings."—Vol. i. p. 317.

* Mr. Macgillivray's observation accords with this (vol. i. p. 465). In some of the latest works on British ornithology (Yarr. p. 426, &c.), the adult birds are stated to appear in Great Britain only late in the winter, or when the weather is very severe. The earliest seen in two years (Oct. 18th and 23rd,) about Belfast, were adult males.

Since the preceding was written, snow-buntings have become greatly more numerous in the vicinity of Belfast. By the "new cut" in the channel of the river adjacent to the quays, an extensive bank is left insulated, and being covered with a profuse growth of *Atriplex patula* and *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*, these birds have, notwithstanding its proximity to a large town, come in great numbers to it at the beginning of every winter for a few years past. They remain there during the whole of that season, in all kinds of weather, and until early in spring, when they take their departure north-wards. In the winter of 1843–44, the plants just named covered this tract—called Dargan's Island—and these birds were remarkably abundant, about a thousand appearing in one flock. The island having since been partially levelled and sown with grass-seed, they have visited it in much smaller numbers, but from 200 to 300 have been seen there in a flock in the winter of 1845–46. In consequence of this "preserve," the species has been greatly more common than formerly about the shores of Belfast bay, where the short grassy margin is their favourite haunt. They are naturally easy of approach, allow one to come within a few yards of them, but become wild after continued persecution. Some adult males are always to be seen in the earliest large flocks that appear.

Immense numbers came to the main-land opposite Rough Island, Strangford, at the beginning of winter 1844–45, and throughout a range of several miles, committed great devastation by picking up the sown wheat, which they got at, along the edges of the ridges. The farmers were literally up in arms against them, and killed many, but the birds eventually became so wild, as not to admit of approach. They had never been seen there before, and were looked upon as some foreign species, that came to destroy the wheat crop, by picking the seed from the ground. They remained from early in November, until the beginning of March. About the shores of Dublin bay, these birds are often met with during winter, and sometimes in great numbers. The snow-bunting, by thus frequenting the mountain-top and the sea-side, reminds us of certain plants which are only found in either locality.

Wilson, Audubon, and Dr. Richardson give most interesting accounts of the snow-bunting from personal observation in North America. The last author had the gratification of meeting with the bird in its breeding-haunt on that continent. Mr. Macgillivray treats fully of it in Scotland, and Mr. Selby favours us with the result of his observations on the species in the north of England.

When ascending, in the month of July, above the perpetual snow-line of the Alps of Switzerland, Mt. St. Gothard, Grimsel, Col de Four, &c., and to the height of 11,000 feet, the snow-finch (*Fringilla nivalis*), a bird which in size, marking, and note, reminded me at a little distance of the snow-bunting, was almost ever-present. Its feeble voice, mingled occasionally with that of the alpine accentor (*Accentor alpinus*), seemed in one sense, strangely out of unison with the stern grandeur of the scenery, where rarely any other sound broke upon the ear, than the rent of the glacier or the distant fall of the avalanche.

The Lapland Bunting (*Plectrophanes Lapponica*), which has in a very few instances been met with in England, has not yet been obtained in Scotland (Jard., Macg.) or Ireland.

THE COMMON BUNTING.

Corn-Bunting. Briar-Bunting.

Emberiza miliaria, Linn.

Is found throughout the island, and is permanently resident.

The *Common* Bunting, as it is called, is not by any means so generally dispersed in Ireland, as the yellow bunting, and accordingly, is not so *common* * or well known as that species, which is one of the first birds that we become familiar with in childhood. The names of *briar* and *corn* bunting applied to the bird in the north, of Ireland are more correctly expressive; in the south, it is locally called corn-bird.† A few of these buntings were

* Since the preceding was written, it has been observed that Sir Wm. Jardine comments in a similar manner on the name, as applied to the bird in the south of Scotland.—Brit. Birds, vol. ii, p. 306.

† Mr. Poole.

seen on Tory Island, off the north-west of Donegal, in August, 1845.*

On reading the opinion expressed by Sir Wm. Jardine, in his edition of White's Selborne, † that there is a migration of buntings to Great Britain in winter, I thought it might be likewise applicable to Ireland; but on subsequent consideration, did not feel altogether convinced that there is any increase to the number of these birds bred in the country. The change from the summer to the winter haunts of the bunting, might lead to such a supposition, as about the time that our winter birds of passage are arriving, flocks of buntings make their appearance in localities,—(often hedges along road-sides)—which, frequenting through the winter, they leave on the genial approach of spring: so late as the end of March, they occasionally remain congregated. Mr. J. R. Garrett is inclined to believe in a migration, from the circumstance that early every winter during his residence at Cromac, near Belfast, flocks consisting of from one to two hundred birds appeared, and continued until spring. They were to be seen every evening in a plantation of Scotch elm trees, where they remained like grey linnets for about an hour before retiring to roost in an adjoining shrubbery. A few pair only were seen about the place during summer.

The song of the bunting may be heard in the north throughout greater part of the year, including occasionally the months of November and December.

My observation is quite in accordance with that of White, who, in his history of Selborne, remarks of the bunting, that "in our woodland enclosed districts it is a rare bird." It is rather an inhabitant of the bare arable, than of the rich and wooded parts of the country, and where some little portion of wildness still exists, such as is implied in the common name of *briar*-bunting. The ditch-bank run wild with "briars" or brambles (*Rubi*) has more charms for this bird than the "neat trim-hedge," and within the shelter of such humble underwood its nest is made. It also builds frequently on the ground in meadows.‡ In severe frost

* Mr. Hyndman.

† It is not repeated in his subsequent work on Brit. Birds. ‡ Mr. J. R. Garrett.

and snow, buntings not only betake themselves to the roads for subsistence, but may be seen at such times in the less-frequented streets and stable-yards of the town of Belfast. The plumage of this species is very liable to be varied with white or cream-colour, and when with the latter, some which I have seen were of a very rich and handsome appearance. Mr. R. Chute mentions his having obtained them in Kerry as yellow as the canary finch. On opening buntings killed in winter, I have generally found them filled with grain; sometimes with the seeds of weeds, in addition to which were fragments of stone. They possess a very strong gizzard.

YELLOW BUNTING.

Yellow Ammer. Yellow Yorlin.

Emberiza citrinella, Linn.

Is common in suitable localities throughout the island, and is resident.

This handsome bird, differing from the last-noticed species in being a constant resident about the farm, and precincts of the rural dwelling, is very well known in Ireland. Its monotonous, and to my ear, mournful song, interpreted in Scotland as resembling the words, "*de'il, de'il, de'il, take ye,* that is, the cruel nesters,"* is heard in mild weather throughout the greater part of the year. It sometimes breeds very late. The nest, from being placed in an open hedge or bare grassy ditch-bank, is often easily discovered. A person well versed in the sites chosen by birds for their nests, informs me, that he has most frequently found that of the yellow bunting in furze. A note is before me of one situated like a lark's on the ground in the middle of a field. It was lined as usual with hair, and contained the full number of eggs on the 25th of April. In a friend's garden near Belfast, a pair of these birds built their nest at the edge of a gravel-walk, and brought out four young, three of which were soon destroyed. In consequence

* Macgillivray, B. B. vol. i. p. 449.

of this, the nest containing the fourth was for greater safety removed to a bank a few feet distant, where the single young one was so well provided with food by its parents, as quickly to grow to an extraordinary size. A similar fact in the case of the redbreast is mentioned in a preceding page; but, in that instance, the young one was presumed to have died from over-feeding. The stomachs of such of these birds as have come under my observation in winter, generally contained wheat, or some other grain; together with particles of stone or brick. Yellow yorlin is the common name bestowed on this species in the north of Ireland. —Yellow-hammer is a term likewise used; but as Mr. Yarrell well remarks, the word should be *Ammer*, the German of bunting, and not *hammer*, which is meaningless as applied to this bird.

About the shooting-lodge at Aberarder, Inverness-shire, a few of these birds were seen by us in September, 1842, although no sparrows were there, and but one robin appeared in the course of several autumns. In Holland, France, and Switzerland, the yellow bunting is commonly met with. The handsome species resembling this, but with a black head—*Emb. melanocephala*—flew on board H.M.S. Beacon when about eighty miles east of Malta, on the 23rd of April, 1841; and another of these birds was seen in a marshy place between Constantinople and the Valley of Sweet Waters, on the 14th of May.

The Cirl Bunting (*Emb. cirlus*), as yet unknown in Ireland, is chiefly confined to the more southern portion of England, where it is indigenous. It has been recorded as occurring in Scotland* only once. The Ortolan Bunting (*Emb. hortulana*) has in very few instances been obtained in England, but not in Scotland † or Ireland.

* Jardine and Macgillivray.

† Ibid.

THE BLACK-HEADED BUNTING.

Reed Bunting. Reed Sparrow.

Emberiza Schœniclus, Linn.

Is a resident species distributed over the island, which from the prevailing humidity, is peculiarly well suited to it.

The reed-bunting is one of those birds, which, though not rare, are nowhere numerous. Owing to its abode being among the shrubby underwood or herbage in moist places and at the edge of waters, it is not very commonly or popularly known. It is interesting from being an inhabitant of localities in which comparatively few other species are to be seen:—often have I been highly pleased by observing a few of these birds gathering in to roost for the night upon the exposed roots of alders or willows that overhung the gently-flowing stream. Like their congeners, however, reed-buntings will betake themselves during the snow-storm to the public roads for food, but at such times only, have I met with them out of their favourite haunts.* Stomachs of reed-buntings shot in January, contained seeds, and much gravel.

In different parts of Ireland, the reed-bunting has the undue reputation of being a sweet songster of the night, and is believed to be the veritable "Irish nightingale;"—a name bestowed on the mysterious bird, be that what it may, which sings through the summer night. In strict justice, the sedge-warbler may lay claim to the flattering appellation. Montagu, with his usual acuteness, long since accounted for this error in the following words:—"It is somewhat extraordinary that the manners and habits of so common a bird should remain so long in obscurity; even modern authors tell us it is a song-bird, and sings after sunset.† * *

* Mr. Macgillivray considers the species as "migratory in most parts of Scotland, departing in October, and reappearing about the beginning of April." vol. i. p. 455.

† The omission here relates to the nest, respecting which Montagu was in error, having described that of the *reed,* in place of that of the *sedge,* warbler. I have altered a few words of the extract from plural to singular. A nest of this bunting which came under Mr. Poole's notice, was placed among the stems of dry grass, on the side of a bank overhanging water and was lined with cow-hair. The young were nearly fledged on the 26th of May; their mutings almost filled the bottom of the nest.

There can be no doubt, however, that the song of the sedge-warbler has been taken for that of this bird; for, as they both frequent the same places in the breeding-season, that elegant little warbler is pouring forth its varied notes concealed in the thickest part of a bush; while this is conspicuously perched above, whose tune is not deserving the name of song; consisting only of two notes, the first is repeated three or four times, the last single and more sharp.*" Reed-sparrow, and blackcap, are the names commonly bestowed on this bird in the north of Ireland.

THE CHAFFINCH.

Fringilla cælebs, Linn.

Is a common resident species throughout the cultivated and wooded parts of Ireland.

It frequents also the squares and gardens of the town, where occasionally its song is heard. The beauty of the nest of this bird, with lichens and moss intermingled in its formation, has often been commented on; but the lichen is in many localities of necessity omitted, and the moss becomes externally the component material. Particular notes of several nests are before me, all of which (except one, built in a whin) were placed on the branches of trees. A nest which came under the observation of Mr. J. R. Garrett, was built against the stem of the common pine, and rested on one of the branches, to which it was bound with a piece of fine whip-cord. This was taken once round the branch, and both of its ends were firmly interwoven in the material of the nest.

The chaffinch is said frequently to use "the nests of spiders in the formation of the outward embroidery of her own most beautiful structure." † It is remarked by Rennie of some species of our small birds, that its nests about a cotton-mill in Ayrshire were found to be lined with cotton. Mr. J. Grimshaw, junr., has informed me that at Whitehouse, near Belfast, the chaffinches and common sparrows, which built in the neighbourhood of two

* Ornithological Dictionary, † Poole.

cotton-mills, always made use of cotton in the construction of their nests. The mills were a quarter of a mile distant from each other, and all the nests of these birds erected in the intervening plantations, as well as in the immediate vicinity of the mills, exhibited the foreign product, not only as lining, but exteriorly. On remarking to my informant, that its conspicuous colour would betray the presence of the nest, and not accord with the theory, that birds assimilate the outward appearance of their structures, to surrounding objects, he stated, that on the contrary, the use of the cotton in that locality might rather be considered as rendering the nest more difficult of detection, as the road-side hedges and neighbouring trees were always dotted with tufts of it.

Chaffinches feed chiefly on seeds and grain through the winter, as proved by my examination of many specimens :—in all of which fragments of stone or brick were also found,—the gizzard was very strong. Early in the month of May, when a choice of food was to be had, I have on different occasions, observed these birds suddenly dart from the branches of trees after flies in the manner of the spotted flycatcher. During the winter and early spring, a flock consisting of both sexes was observed regularly to frequent a merchant's yard situated on one of the quays of Belfast, for the purpose of feeding on flax-seed, which was always scattered about the place: this seed has proved a successful bait for taking them in traps. Chaffinches, with other seed-eating birds, have been observed in autumn employed in stripping the keys from ash-trees; getting the seed end in their bills, they chop it until the contents are dislodged, when the capsule falls to the ground.* They sometimes congregate in large flocks before winter actually sets in: at the end of October I have thus remarked them, and occasionally in company with green-linnets.

There has been much written from actual observation, both on the continent and in Great Britain, and from the days of Linnæus to the present time, on the subject of the separation of the sexes of chaffinches in the winter. Montagu, writing from Devonshire, says,

* Poole.

the sexes do not separate with us, and Mr. Knapp makes a similar remark with reference to Gloucestershire. White frequently observed large flocks of females about Selborne in Hampshire. Mr. Selby has noticed the females as keeping apart from the males, in Northumberland; and Sir Wm. Jardine remarks, respecting the south of Scotland, that young males are intermixed with the females. I have seen very large flocks in the north of Ireland, in which there were no males, and once during frost in the month of December, killed nine out of a flock, all of which proved to be females. Again, I have observed flocks of moderate size, consisting of a fair proportion of both sexes, and have always considered them to be our indigenous birds. The others, I am disposed to believe, from never having met with flocks of male birds, had migrated to this island from more northern latitudes, where they left their mates behind:—in the north of Europe, associations consisting of males only, have been observed during winter.

In July, 1840, Mr. R. Davis, junr., of Clonmel, forwarded to Belfast, for my inspection, a bird killed in that neighbourhood, and sent to him as a white chaffinch. It had frequently been seen in company with chaffinches, and was shot along with them, in the preceding month of May. It is thus described in my notes:—"This bird, which is singularly and beautifully marked, is of the full adult size of the chaffinch in every measurement. The prevailing colour of its plumage is pure white, but the head is tinted with yellow; the entire back is of the richest canary-yellow; wing and tail-coverts likewise delicately tinted with that colour. A few of the blackish-gray and cinnamon-brown feathers of the ordinary chaffinch appear as follows:—one or two on the head, some on the back, and some very few on the wings and tail, but altogether they are inconspicuous. The primaries and the long tail-feathers, as well as their shafts, are pure white. The plumage, on the whole, partakes as much of that of the canary as of the chaffinch." Mr. J. V. Stewart mentions a white chaffinch being shot in his neighbourhood. In May, 1844, two young birds of this species connected together by a fleshy ligament, like that of the Siamese

twins, but placed lower down on the body, were presented to the Belfast Museum by John Legge, Esq., of Glynn Park, Carrickfergus. They were taken in that gentleman's garden after they had just left the nest.

When at Aberarder, Inverness-shire, and Ballochmorrie, Ayrshire, at the end of autumn, I have remarked that chaffinches are not only very numerous, but take the place of sparrows about the dwelling-house. In Holland, France, Switzerland, and Italy, we commonly meet with this species.

The description of the chaffinch and its propensities, in the Journal of a Naturalist, is admirable. Sir Wm. Jardine reports on both the good, and the evil that it does.* Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 302.

THE MOUNTAIN FINCH.

Brambling.

Fringilla montifringilla, Linn.

Is a frequent, if not a regular winter visitant.

The Rev. G. M. Black remarked a few of these birds in midwinter for several years successively on the mountains about Newtown-Crommelin, county of Antrim; occasionally they were in company with chaffinches. Almost every winter for many years past, I have been aware of their occurrence in the north in very limited numbers, and have learned from correspondents in all quarters of the island that they are of occasional, but generally unfrequent occurrence, in their respective neighbourhoods. They have been met with in the most southern parts, but seem rather to decrease from north to south. On the 18th of October, I once received a mountain finch, which was shot in the vicinity of Belfast, and in November, the species has been seen here, associating with green-linnets and chaffinches, when for some time before and after its appearance, the weather was mild. Such birds had evidently come hither in the ordinary course of migra-

* A friend living near Belfast observed this bird to feed its young on the green caterpillars which destroy the leaves of the gooseberry.

tion; but, in one instance, I had interesting circumstantial evidence that others have been compelled to visit this island by severity of weather. This was a day or two before the very great snow-storm in the beginning of January, 1827, when one of these birds, which was secured and sent to me, alighted on the Chieftain steam-packet, on the passage from Liverpool to Belfast. It had most probably been the forerunner of the many, which during the deep snow immediately following, were shot in different parts of Antrim and Down. They were chiefly met with about stack-yards, in company with other small graminivorous birds. The snow-storm as usual had commenced earlier in an easterly direction than in Ireland, which, to birds flying before the storm, would be the last place of resort in its latitude, in the eastern hemisphere. In like manner, mountain finches may have crossed the Irish sea, in the very severe weather early in the year 1841, as Mr. R. Davis, writing from Clonmel, stated that a flock, from which several birds were shot, was seen near that town on the 5th of February: * he had not before known them as visitants to that neighbourhood.

In a preceding severe winter, 1837–38, they were much more numerous than usual. Specimens, shot during frost in the spacious yard of the Royal Society House, Dublin, came under my notice; and at the most inclement period of that season, I have been assured that some of these birds took shelter in the houses in the town of Dundalk. This was the first season in which they were known to visit the neighbourhood of Cork: they were found associating there, with sparrows, yellow buntings, &c.† In the winter of 1842–43 they were more numerous than I have ever known them to be; specimens from the counties of Londonderry, Antrim, and Down, came under my notice, and about thirty were seen in a flock, on the shore of Belfast bay. My correspondent at Clonmel too, reported them as of occasional occurrence there, towards

* When at Fresh-water bay, Isle of Wight, in the autumn of 1841, I saw several stuffed specimens of the mountain finch on sale at the "Museum;" and learned, that they had been shot in the vicinity during the frost and excessive cold above noticed, when many of them made their appearance:—a circumstance of such rare occurrence, that their species was unknown.

† Dr. Harvey.

the end of that winter, when he sometimes saw them picking about the roads. Two were killed near Blennerville, county of Kerry, the same season by Mr. R. Chute, who had known but a single specimen to be previously obtained in that quarter. In England, we learn as a matter of course, that they were particularly numerous during the same time: — Mr. J. Lewcock writing from Farnham on the 21st of April, 1843, stated that "this bird appeared in immense numbers in the neighbourhood of Farnham (Surrey), during the last winter, while for many years previously single specimens had only occasionally been met with."* The Rev. George Robinson of Tandragee, informs me, that on the 25th of March, 1844, he saw a flock of some thousands, unmixed, so far as he observed, with any other species, in a beech wood at Elm Park, county of Armagh. They remained about a week there. Early in January, 1847, they were met with in the county of Longford.

A pair of mountain finches, kept in a very large cage with other species, in a green-house attached to the dwelling of a relative, near Belfast, screamed so constantly throughout moonlight nights as to disturb the family, and consequently had to be expelled from the place.

THE HOUSE SPARROW.

Passer domesticus, Ray.
Fringilla domestica, Linn.

Is common in Ireland.

This bird is in some places much persecuted by individuals, who, knowing the injury committed by it on the grain-crops and in the garden, are yet ignorant of the great benefit conferred by its destruction of caterpillars, &c. A sparrow-destroying order given forth in our juvenile days may here be mentioned. An old soldier, who had been in the Peninsular War, was, on that account, selected from the farm-labourers as being of course the best shot, and with plenary instructions to destroy all sparrows, he spent day after

* Zoologist, p. 188.

day in going about the corn-fields for the purpose of shooting them. The report of his gun was frequently heard, but no testimony in the shape of sparrows was ever produced, by which he could be convicted of the shedding of blood. We spent one day with him. Whenever he saw that two or three sparrows had alighted together on the standing corn sufficiently near, which was by no means seldom, he fired at them. Often as he did so, not a bird fell, though how much of the grain was thereby sacrificed, we cannot take upon ourselves to say, for *it* could not be missed. The shooter would not believe that this result was owing to his want of skill, and more than once trampled down the grain to look after the imaginary *fallen* birds, which were in reality afar off rejoicing at their escape. When the wages of this sportsman, and the value of the ammunition he expended, together with the grain destroyed by him, are considered, there can be little doubt that the amount of damage, which the sparrows could have done (and nevertheless did do), must be trivial in comparison. Many well-attested accounts have been published of the destruction of crops by insects, in consequence of small birds, (sparrows in particular,) being destroyed for their pilfering propensities. When in France in 1841, I was made acquainted with a recent instance of this kind. In the fine rich district of Burgundy, lying to the south of Auxerre, and chiefly covered with vineyards, small birds had been some time before destroyed in great numbers. An extraordinary increase of caterpillars, &c., soon became apparent, and occasioned such immense damage to the crops, that a law was passed, prohibitory of the future destruction of the birds.

The boldness and impudence of sparrows in obtruding themselves everywhere, are somewhat redeemed by the comicality of their manners. I was once much amused by observing one literally "dancing attendance" on a pet squirrel, as it breakfasted on bread in the wheel of the cage: the bird hopped about all the while, eagerly eyeing the squirrel, and picking up every crumb that fell.

The freedom from all fear on the part of sparrows, is particularly manifest by their feeding close to ferocious animals in zoo-

logical gardens. They make themselves quite at home too, in the company of the most gorgeous-plumaged birds. I recollect them regularly breaking through the meshes of an aviary-net (merely large enough to admit their bodies) covering over a high inclosure in which a number of golden pheasants were kept, that they might partake of their food. Cock-sparrows quite gain on one's affections by the assiduity with which they feed their progeny. I have frequently observed them on the highway and streets, attended by some of their young, generally three in number, which, with quivering wings, besought and followed them for food, and never in vain. The parents too, by their fine erect carriage at such times, evidently showed much pride in their progeny.

The sparrow, though not an early rising bird, is awake betimes, and as a colony will keep chattering for perhaps an hour about their roosting-place before retiring for the night, so do they in the morning make known their "whereabouts" by the same means, some time before they show themselves to the day:—on the 11th of June, and a few mornings previously, I once noted, that on awakening at ten minutes past three o'clock, a colony of these birds frequenting the ivy which covered a town-house, were heard loudly chattering, and that for half an hour afterwards none stirred out.*

The proprietor of the nearest fields of grain to Belfast, in one direction (about a mile distant), complains loudly against hosts of *town* sparrows attacking his ripening crops. They go there early in the morning, and after satisfying their appetites at his expense, return to spend the day in town. In our own garden, these

* The entire note may perhaps be worth insertion.—*Belfast, June the 11th*, 1832. At ten minutes past 3 o'clock, sparrows chattering vociferously in their ivied dwelling, but none stirring out until forty minutes after that hour:—forty-five minutes past 3, jack-daws coming from the country, arrive on the town chimneys:—forty-seven minutes past 3, canary-finch in the house commences singing, and cocks in the neighbouring yards crowing. At a quarter past 4, the American grey squirrel in the house heard breaking his morning repast of almonds. At forty-five minutes past 4, sparrows still "chaffing" in the ivy,—implying that some have not yet stirred out. *May the 17th*, 1846.—I heard sparrows in London beginning to chirp at half-past 3, A. M. Remarked them some days after (several at a time) washing in St. James' Park; so that dirty as the London sparrows look, they do perform their ablutions: I never saw birds more thoroughly wet themselves.

birds were for a number of years very destructive to growing peas, almost living upon and amongst them, perching on the pea-rods, and with their strong bills, breaking through the pods to get at the peas, which they ate, just when in perfection for the table. But in the same place I have several times seen sparrows in chase of the large white garden-butterfly (*Pontia brassicæ*), whose caterpillars are so destructive; and have remarked them fly against the stem of the dandelion (*Leontodon taraxacum*) and weigh it to the ground, that they might feed upon the seeds.

These birds sometimes prove very annoying, especially in lofty houses, by placing their nests in spouts, and thus stopping the course of the rain.* From a country-house whence their nests were for this reason always ejected, they resorted to the adjacent trees, and in them erected their large and untidy, though domed structures. For this purpose, the branches of the balm of gilead and spruce firs, which naturally offered a firmer, more level, and compact basement, than those of the deciduous trees, were preferred, and when the latter were resorted to, the larch-fir was generally chosen: the nests were chiefly composed of hay—a hay-loft being adjacent—and lined with a profusion of feathers. Its feather-bed nest, and habit of its sunning itself on our warmest days, evince the sparrow's love of heat. At this place they were much persecuted; above fifty having more than once been killed at a single shot. It need hardly be remarked, that sparrows frequently build in rookeries, as well as occupy the nest of the house martin. The latter is generally noticed by authors as a very dishonest proceeding; and though it is not my desire to be the apologist of any of the manifold errors of the sparrow, still, justice has not been done to the bird; for the "pendent bed" of the martin is generally tenantless when taken possession of, and the sparrow may have no anticipation of the rightful owner coming across the seas to claim the property. In like manner, the sparrow occasionally takes possession of the burrow of the sand martin before the

* A lady in Manchester, in the summer of 1841, lost a piece of valuable old lace, which was left out to dry; on the spouts being cleared of sparrows' nests, it was discovered uninjured, partly lining one of them.

vernal return of this species to the place of its birth; and perched at the entrance of its neighbour's burrow, the intruder certainly peers about, and chatters with as much confidence, as if the domicile were its own by "right of descent." But few writers on natural history would seem to have observed the sparrow in such situations. I have frequently done so, even when the sand-bank was in the close vicinity of trees and houses, the ordinary nesting places of the species. The following paragraph appeared in the *Glasgow Argus*, in May, 1846:—

"Sea Sparrows. Last week, on the *Aurora* leaving the Broomielaw for Belfast, a sparrow's nest was discovered in the rigging, but the birds did not choose on that occasion to accompany their nest to the Green Isle. On the return of the vessel, however, the sparrows again visited their former abode, which had not been disturbed by the voyage, and deposited an egg in it, which attached them so much to it, that they valorously left their native land, and sailed with the Aurora for Ireland." A considerable time after this was said to have occurred, I had inquiry made respecting the circumstance. The mate of the vessel corroborated all from his own observation, except the statement that the birds had crossed the channel, but, he added that they might have done so without his knowledge. The nest rested partly on the sail and was destroyed, by its being unfurled, when containing one or two eggs. The vessel then sailed every second day from Glasgow to Belfast.*

Examples of this bird partly, and some altogether white, occasionally occur; a friend has seen three white individuals in one nest. Mr. J. V. Stewart remarks, in his Catalogue of the Birds, &c., of Donegal:—"I have had a female milk-white sparrow in confinement for two years; it was of this colour when taken from the nest. At its moults there has been no change in the colour of its plumage: it has got the red eyes of all albinoes."† Mr. R. Davis, junr., of Clonmel, mentions in a letter, that in February,

* A representation of an unfortunate sparrow "hung by the neck," accidentally, will be found in the Illustrated London News of January 20th, 1844, and Yarrell's Brit. Birds, 2nd edit.

† Mag. Nat. Hist., vol. v. p. 583.

1841, he "got a singularly deformed female sparrow, in which the upper mandible is slightly twisted to one side, the lower one nearly two inches long, and turned down like that of a curlew: the bird was seen to feed by laying the side of its head to the ground."

These birds are very common in the island of Rathlin,* and in August, 1845, several were observed about the round tower, and neighbouring cottages in Tory Island.† Sir Wm. Jardine and Mr. Macgillivray say nothing of the scarcity of sparrows in any part of the mainland of Scotland, but about Aberarder, Inverness-shire, none came under my notice in September, 1842, though there are numerous corn-fields and cottages in the valley, nor were they observed about Ballochmorrie, in Ayr-shire, in October of the following year, but I am told that they do sometimes appear there—in both localities their place was supplied by chaffinches. They are said to be numerously dispersed throughout Shetland and Orkney.‡

On account of the propensities alluded to, sparrows are perhaps the most amusing of our small common birds; but all bounds of propriety seem to be set at nought, when quite out of character with the scene, they, so begrimed, squat, chatter, and take up their abode on the stupendous cathedral of St. Paul's in London, beneath whose canopy, the ashes of the mightiest only among ourselves find a domeiile.

The Bishop of Norwich, in his Familiar History of Birds, treats very pleasantly of the sparrow, as Mr. Knapp also does in the Journal of a Naturalist. In the Recreations of Christopher North, a most ludicrous account of it will be found (vol. i. p. 45). Bewick too, waxes warm and eloquent in its defence, against the sweeping denunciation of Buffon.

The Tree or Mountain Sparrow (*Fringilla montana*) appears in Templeton's Catalogue of Irish Vertebrate Animals "as a doubtful native;" but to my ornithological friends and myself is quite unknown. The species is only partially distributed in England, (Yarr.) and has not been found in Scotland (Jard.; Macg.).

* Dr. J. D. Marshall. † Mr. Hyndman.

‡ Dunn's Ornith. Guide to Ork. and Shet. p. 80.

THE GREEN LINNET.

Greenfinch.

Coccothraustes chloris, Linn. (sp.)
Loxia „ „
Fringilla „ Temm.

Is common and resident in suitable localities throughout the island.

This bird is generally described, simply as found in cultivated districts, but this gives no correct idea of the true haunts of the species, or of its partialities. These, I have seen set forth, with the nice discrimination and fullness which are so desirable, in one work only,—the 'British Birds' of Sir Wm. Jardine.

This author remarks on the green linnets, "frequenting cultivated districts in *the vicinity of gardens and limited plantations*. During winter they congregate in large flocks, feeding on the stubble ground on various small seeds, and resorting towards night-fall to the vicinity of the *plantations or evergreens surrounding some mansion*. * * * In spring, when paired, they resort to the *garden and shrubbery*." The words in *italics* mark the nice discrimination alluded to, and are in entire accordance with my own observation on the favourite haunts of the green linnet, to which alone they will strictly apply. By the plantation of shrubberies, I have known this handsome bird to be attracted to, and soon become plentiful in, a rather wild district near Belfast, from which it had previously been absent: the Portugal laurel (*Prunus Lusitanica*), with its dense foliage being its favourite resort. It is usually described as a late breeding bird; but in the locality alluded to, which is at a considerable elevation, a journal-note of April the 4th, 1832, mentions busy preparations for building going forward in glen, shrubbery, and garden.* A nest, found in a beech-hedge at this place, was so tastefully lined as to be considered worth preserving. Outwardly, it was constructed of roots interwoven with mosses; but, mixed with black and white

* They commence breeding early, but have also nests very late in the season.

hairs in the lining, were swans-down and thistle-seed, this last being evidently made use of on account of its plumed appendages, all of which remained attached to the seed. Although these birds cannot strictly be said to build in company, yet so many as twenty nests may occasionally be reckoned in a moderate-sized shrubbery; and not unfrequently, too, be found in the same plant. Portugal laurels, hollies, and large evergreen shrubs, are the favourite sites. A correspondent mentions, that nests containing the young, have been removed to a considerable distance, without their being forsaken by the parent birds; and, that in several instances the males were observed feeding the females. The latter left the nests on the approach of their partners, and when partaking of the food brought to them, kept up a cry like young birds when being fed. Mr. Poole has once known the nest of this bird to be completed in the county of Wexford, so early as the 26th of March. Its "throwing itself about on wing at this season in a very striking and beautiful manner" has not escaped my correspondent's observation. This peculiar flight of the male bird is described by Sir Wm. Jardine.

That greenlinnets collect into flocks, and remain so for the winter is well known. I have remarked about fifty together, in the neighbourhood of Belfast at that season, feeding in the highest cultivated fields adjoining the heath of the mountain-top, as well as in low-lying tracts, distant from any plantation or place, where they could roost for the night.* In summer likewise they are occasionally congregated. On the 27th of June, a flock of about thirty was once observed feeding upon a mountain pasture, and numbers have at the same season come to meadows at the sea-side when ready for being mown, apparently for the purpose of feeding on the seed of the dandelion (*Leontodon Taraxacum*), which was very abundant:—both localities were near to cultivated ground, and plantations of trees and shrubs.

* In favourite localities, both in the north and south, flocks consisting of from 200 to 300 birds are not unfrequent, late in the autumn and during winter; when they often feed about stack-yards. They are much fonder of the seed of the corn-marigold (*Chrysanthemum segetum*) than of the grain itself, among which that handsome weedgrows; chaffinches and goldfinches are likewise so.

I have known greenlinnets taken young at Fort-William, near Belfast, that after being kept for some little time, were given their liberty every morning. In the evening they returned as regularly to their cage to roost, as in a wild state they would have done to their favourite tree or shrub.* Old birds very soon become tame after capture.

The only food which I have found in the stomachs of a number of these birds killed during winter was grain and seeds of different kinds;—in addition to which there were fragments of brick or stone.

THE HAWFINCH.

Grosbeak.

Coccothraustes vulgaris, Flem.
Loxia coccothraustes, Linn.
Fringilla „ Temm.

Is an occasional winter visitant.

A VERY fine specimen was shot near Hillsborough, county of Down, upwards of twenty years ago. In the winter of 1832–33 (?), the Rev. G. M. Black observed a pair of these birds feeding for a long time upon the haws of some old thorn-trees at Stranmillis, near Belfast;—he managed to approach within about fifteen paces, so as to see them well. Mr. J. V. Stewart, in his paper on the Birds, &c., of Donegal, gives the following interesting account of two of these birds, which he killed and examined anatomically. The communication is dated from Ards House, Dec. 4th, 1828:—

"I shot a pair of these birds a few days ago, in fine plumage; the first instance, I believe, of their occurring in Ireland. Their strength of beak, as compared with the size of the bird, is quite wonderful; it results from very strong and large muscles, which, extending on either side from the eye to the occiput [hind head] reach from the lower mandible to the top of the cranium, where they meet; they are separated from the eyes by deep bony ridges, to which they are firmly attached. By contracting these muscles, which are thus so firmly attached to the skull, it exerts such a force as enables it to crack, with its hard and strong bill, the thick stone of the haw-

* The canary-finch will rarely do this. But one which flew away from its cage at Cromac, one morning in the beginning of September, returned on the following morning at an early hour before any of the inmates of the house were up, and made known its presence by tapping at one of the windows with its bill. On a cage being presented, the bird flew eagerly into it.

thorn berry, an operation requiring a strong exertion of the human jaw. On dissection, I found one of these stones thus cracked in one of their stomachs, with the fresh kernel still in one half of the shell. A few hours after they were dead, I took a strong pair of scissors and a knife, using them as levers, to force open their bills, and found the muscle had so firmly contracted, that to effect my purpose I had to use a wedge; a forcible proof, it will be allowed, of their strength. Their bills alone, however, are formed as a pair of *nut-crackers*, as the muscles of the neck, unlike those of the wood-peckers, are not strong. Not so with the wings, which are furnished with such strong muscles, that they could almost vie with the pigeon in strength and rapidity of flight. They would, therefore, unlike many of our birds of passage, be well calculated for distant migrations." *

Dubourdieu, in his survey of the County of Antrim, observes respecting Lough Neagh, that "the grosbeak (*Loxia*), like a green linnet, but larger, often resorts to the wooded farms in its neighbourhood in winter." The crossbill, and not the species under consideration, is most probably here alluded to. That the latter cannot be so, at least correctly, seems to me sufficiently evident from the circumstance, that Mr. Templeton knew and corresponded with Dubourdieu, and in his catalogue of our native birds, he makes no mention whatever of the grosbeak. On the 8th of March, 1845, the gamekeeper at Tollymore Park, county of Down, sent me a detailed and excellent description of two birds, belonging to a species unknown to him, which had been lately shot there. They proved to be grosbeaks. He stated that there were one or two more still in the park, and that they fed on the stones of the laurel trees. At the end of March, 1846, the hawfinch was again seen there.

The Phœnix Park, Dublin, where there are woods of venerable hawthorns, has, above all places in Ireland, produced examples of this bird. Notes of its occurrence there in the following years are before me:—in 1828–29, when the first of the season was obtained on the 6th of November, and about a dozen more at various dates through the winter;† in 1830 (?), numbers were killed and supplied to a bird-preserver in the metropolis at the rate of a shilling each; in 1831, the Rev. T. Knox records three individuals from this locality;‡ in 1832–33 several were

* Mag. Nat. Hist., vol. v. p. 582. † Dr. J. D. Marshall.
‡ *Ibid.* p. 734.

killed;—again in Jan., 1837, and early in Nov., 1844, others were shot. The Phœnix Park—the natural beauty of whose scenery is admirably depicted by Lady Morgan in her "O'Brien's and O'Flaherty's" as a prelude to its being the scene of "the Review"—is very well adapted to be the permanent residence of the grosbeak. Although the greater portion of the park may be too much frequented for so shy a bird,* it would be desirable to ascertain whether in any of the retired glades, this remarkable and attractive species may not "increase and multiply." One of these birds was shot near Milltown, Kerry, at the end of October, 1830 (?),† and during the winter of 1844–5, the species was obtained in different parts of that county.‡ I learn from Dr. Harvey of Cork, that a hawfinch was shot at Ardrum, about six miles from that city by the Rev. Joseph Stopford, who communicated the fact to him in Feb. 1844, but without mentioning the date of its occurrence. Another was killed at Cittadella, a mile from Cork, in the winter of 1844–5 (?). In the winter of 1846–7, one was obtained near Youghal.

THE GOLDFINCH.

Goldspink.§

Carduelis elegans, Steph.
Fringilla carduelis, Linn.

Is found in the four provinces of Ireland, but is by no means generally distributed.

In some extensive districts which seem in every respect most

* See an excellent account of the species by Mr. H. Doubleday, in vol. i. of the Magazine of Zoology and Botany.

† Mr. T. F. Neligan. ‡ Mr. R. Chute.

§ This name, which is the vulgar one for the bird in the north of Ireland, is noticed by Mr. Hewitson as one of the names of the yellow bunting. He likewise remarks, that "in the counties of Derby, Nottingham, and Leicester, the goldfinch is universally known by the absurd name of proud tailor:" *—in reference, no doubt, to the varied beauty of his dress.—In like manner, I have known that beautiful fish, the variegated or striped wrasse (*Labrus variegatus*) to be called by fishermen on the coast of Down, and, as I thought, very appropriately, by the name of *livery servant*; its brilliant stripes of blue, orange, &c., fairly entitling it to the soubriquet.

* Eggs Brit. Birds, p. 145, 161.

favourably circumstanced, this bird is not to be found, or only as an occasional visitant. Of all our indigenous species, the beautiful goldfinch seems the most capricious. In one instance, it is known to me, as entirely deserting a part of the country which had been regularly frequented, after a small portion of a mountain-side covered with thistles from time immemorial, was reclaimed, and planted with forest trees. From other localities, I have known the goldfinch, without any apparent reason, flit away, and, unlike many other birds, never revisit the place of its nativity. As the country around Belfast has become more populous, their numbers have decreased. The romantic neighbourhood of Cushendall, about forty miles distant, is now their stronghold in this quarter, the goldfinch being there a very common bird. It is pleasing to witness the social manner in which they feed, several being often engaged regaling upon the seed of a single thistle; on a moderate-sized plant of the more humble knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) I have seen four of them thus occupied at the same time: —the seed of the ragwort (or ragweed, as it is called in the north of Ireland,) is also favourite food. They are very easily alarmed when feeding, and fly off hurriedly in little companies, uttering their pleasing and lively call. In addition to seeds of various kinds found in the stomachs of specimens killed in the months of January and February, I have, though very rarely, observed the remains of coleopterous insects: fragments of stone or brick were always present.

Although this species frequents gardens and well-kept grounds, especially for the purpose of nesting, it seems to prefer such parts of the country as are in some degree wild. Its visits to the farm are certainly not to be considered as complimentary to the owner, for when most out of order and run to weeds, it presents the greatest attraction to the goldfinch. During snow, these birds have been taken in trap-cages baited with flax-seed; sometimes in company with chaffinches. For two years successively, goldfinches built in a cherry-tree within ten paces of a house in which I lived, when they and their young (in each instance four in number) proved highly interesting. I have seen

their nests in willows, sycamores, and pear-trees: in one of the last-named of moderate size, the goldfinch and the thrush at the same time reared their broods, both of which escaped in safety. One correspondent had their nests in the elder, and another in apple-trees, on the outer portion of the branches of which they were generally placed. So early as the 9th of April, the eggs were once found.* The goldfinch is common in the north-west of Donegal.† In winter, flocks are seen in localities where the bird is quite unknown in summer. Mr. Robert Patterson has favoured me with the following interesting note:—

"When at Limerick in August, 1843, I had the pleasure of meeting Randal Burough, Esq., of Cappa Lodge, Kilrush, county of Clare, who communicated to me the following particulars respecting an unusual assemblage of goldfinches, observed at his residence in the winter of 1836. Mr. B. had two pet goldfinches, which were allowed not only to fly about the room, but also through the open window. The winter was beginning to be severe, and the food suitable for small birds consequently scarce, when one day the two goldfinches brought with them a stranger of their own species, who made bold to go into the two cages that were always left open, and regale itself on the hospitality of his new friends, and then took his departure. He returned again and brought others with him, so that in a few days half-a-dozen of these pretty warblers were enjoying the food so bountifully provided for them. The window was now kept up, and the open cages, with plenty of seed, were placed on a table close to it instead of on the sill, as formerly. The birds soon learned to come into the room without fear. The table was by degrees shifted from the window to the centre of the room, and as the number of the birds had continued gradually to increase, there was soon a flock of not less than twenty visiting the apartment daily, and perfectly undisturbed by the presence of the members of the family. As the inclemency of the winter decreased, the number of birds gradually diminished, until at length when the severe weather had quite passed away, there remained none except the original pair."

After perusing the foregoing notes, Mr. Burough added:—

"This account is perfectly correct; and I have only to remark that it was the innocent cause of making many idlers, for several strange gentlemen were in the habit of stopping for hours in amazement at the novel scene. My house is situated immediately on the banks of the Shannon, the road only separating it from the shore, and scarcely any timber growing nearer than a mile.

"The two pet goldfinches must in their flight have gone a considerable distance to make out new acquaintances, for they (goldfinches) are very scarce indeed close to the sea—as Cappa Lodge is situated."—R. B.

* Mr. Poole. † Mr. J. V. Stewart.

The goldfinch is treated of in a very interesting manner in the Journal of a Naturalist. This bird has come under my notice, when travelling in Holland and Switzerland.

THE SISKIN.

Aberdevine.

Carduelis spinus, Linn. (sp.)
Fringilla „

Can only be noted positively as an occasional winter visitant.

Templeton, in his Catalogue of the Vertebrate Animals of Ireland, calls this bird a "rare visitant," and to my ornithological friends and myself, it is known only as a winter bird of passage, resorting at uncertain intervals to this island. Rutty, in his Natural History of Dublin (1772), says, that siskins "come to us in the beginning of winter, and go away in the beginning of spring," implying their regular periodical appearance. That they may occasionally even breed in some parts of the county of Wicklow, and certain suitable localities in the north, is not improbable.

I first saw this species in a wild state, in the brickfields, west of Belfast, in the winter of 1826 or 1827, probably the latter, as in that year, siskins were met with, and for the first time, by Sir Wm. Jardine, in Dumfries-shire. On November the 22nd, 1828, one was shot near Belfast, as it was regaling on a thistle, and in March, 1829, eight or nine were observed in our Botanic Garden, busily engaged in feeding among the branches of some larch-firs then partially in leaf. Early in 1835, many, both of old and young, taken alive near the town of Antrim, were brought to Belfast for sale. One shown to me, had been killed with a stone about that time out of a flock of perhaps thirty, near Ballymena, in the same county. On the Christmas-day of that year, nearly twenty were seen feeding together on thistles in the county of Down; on the 25th of February, 1836, I met with a couple (one of which was an adult male) on the wooded banks of the

river Lagan, near Belfast, where the alder predominates, and so late as the 6th of April, saw one which had been then obtained in the last-named county. During the winter of 1835–36, these birds were unusually plentiful from the north of the island to the neighbourhood of Dublin, where, as well as in the adjacent county of Wicklow, large flocks were seen, and numbers killed: specimens were likewise procured that season in the counties of Cavan and Londonderry. Early in the winter of 1836–37, some were shot in the counties of Dublin and Wicklow.* A friend who has numbered nearly eighty years, and knows the siskin well, recollects its visiting the north of Ireland occasionally throughout his life, and its frequenting in some numbers a large garden attached to a store in the town of Belfast to feed on flax-seed, some of which was always strewn over one of the walks.

Of those before mentioned as brought alive to Belfast, a few were purchased by my friend Wm. Sinclaire, Esq., who considered them very pleasing cage-birds. They were extremely lively and active in all their movements; their song, though not a highly finished performance, was very varied and continuous, yet not too loud for a room. When several were in one cage, they all sang together in a most rambling and discursive manner.

In the winter of 1843–4, siskins visited Ireland from north to south. The first communication received on the subject, was from the Rev. Benj. J. Clarke of Tuam, who on the 4th of Nov. mentioned his having lately, when on a visit at a country-seat on Lough Mask, met for the first time with this species, which appeared in flocks in the plantations, feeding on the seeds of the alder:—in a letter, subsequently received two birds were mentioned as having been killed at the end of October, from a flock of about twenty in the neighbourhood of Armagh. Early in January, 1844, they made their appearance near Dublin; and during that month were met with about Cork. On the 14th of February, one came under my own observation at the Stranmillis road near Belfast: it admitted of my approach within a few yards, and continued feeding at no greater distance for some time.

* They had been obtained in these counties in the winter of 1829–30.

The next winter, in which siskins were met with over a great part of the island, was that of 1847–8, when they were observed in the county of Wexford for the first time. They were seen there on the 26th of November and subsequently.* About Cork they appeared in considerable numbers;† as they did also at Ranelagh, near Dublin, where they were first noticed in December, and remained until the first or second week of April.‡ In these three localities they were associated with the lesser redpole; and in the two latter, were feeding on the seed of the alder. On the 11th of February, the Rev. George Robinson informed me that siskins had been common for the previous month in the county of Armagh generally, including the neighbourhood of his residence, near Tandragee; they came almost daily under his notice, unassociated with any other species, and about fifty were sometimes in a flock. They fed almost wholly on the alder, and looked beautiful, hanging like little parrots, picking at the drooping seeds of that tree:—some were killed feeding on thistles. They admitted of a close approach, and during a recent snow-storm were killed with stones by boys. On the 9th of March, they were last observed about Tandragee. In the vicinity of Belfast, I first heard of them on Christmas day, from which period until the end of February, they were observed in various parts of the counties of Antrim and Down. On the trees bordering the bay about Mertoun, it was said that about a hundred would appear in a flock; even some hundreds are stated to have been seen together, on the wooded banks of Lough Neagh, at Rockland. Some were described as hanging like titmice, feeding on the seeds of the birch: and elegant this graceful tree must have appeared at such a time.

An observant friend, residing in Ayrshire, saw several siskins near Ballantrae, a few days before Christmas, 1839,—a season in which they are not known to have visited Ireland,—and since that period, they have often been common in winter, about the

* Mr. Poole.

† Dr. Harvey, who remarks that they visit a place about five miles from Cork, in the winter, pretty regularly.

‡ Report, Dublin Nat. Hist. Society, June 9th, 1848; where also the species is said to have been obtained near the metropolis in "the winter of 1846."

wooded valley of the river Stinchar; he has sometimes observed them picking like sparrows at the horse-dung on the roads. The bird-catchers believe that siskins breed in that quarter, as they often take young birds,—but the period of their capture has not been so precisely stated as to enable me to form any opinion on the question. The siskin is known to Sir Wm. Jardine and others, to have bred in different parts of Scotland. Goldfinches are so scarce in the part of Ayrshire alluded to, that only one pair has come under the notice of my friend.

THE GREY LINNET.

Common Linnet. Greater Redpole.

Linaria cannabina, Linn. (sp.)
Fringilla „ „
——— *linota*, Gmel.

Is one of the most common birds throughout Ireland at every season.

In nearly all kinds of localities, except the lofty mountain-ridge, this species is to be met with,* either by itself, or associated with other linnets (*Linariæ*); sometimes with chaffinches. It is partial to neglected pastures, or other grounds, where "weeds" are permitted to flourish, and renders the farmer a great service by feeding on their seeds. The cultivator of flax in the north of Ireland, by placing no value on the home-grown seed, until of late years, unwittingly presented a rich autumnal treat to the greylinnet. After this plant had been subjected to steeping, the seed parted freely from the stem, when the bundles were flung out of the pool on the neighbouring banks, where these birds might be seen congregated to feed upon it, so long as any remained. The linnet has a great predilection for deserted quarries, especially of limestone, for the sake, doubtless, of consuming the seeds of the various plants which spring from the débris;—as it also has

* About Aberarder, Inverness-shire, where there is not much choice of locality, I have seen them about wild mountain banks, and have heard them sing when congregated in the middle of September, on the rocky heights above Loch Cor.

for the borders of the sea-shore unaffected by cultivation, where many hundreds may often be seen associated together. The seeds of different species of mouse-ear chick-weed (*Cerastium*) are favourite food. So early as the 10th of July, I once saw several flocks, some containing fifty individuals, on the marine sand-hills at Portrush, near the Giant's Causeway: one of these birds which fed within six paces of me was regaling on the seed of a dandelion, which it extracted with great rapidity; on rising from the ground its call was uttered and repeated for some time on the wing.* The following note was made on September the 21st:—For some time past, I have daily seen flocks of from two to three hundred grey linnets about the rocks at the sea-side near Bangor, county of Down. As they were perched to-day, which was very fine, on low rocks whose bases were washed by the sea, they kept up a pleasing concert, reminding me of that produced by an assembled multitude of redwings (*Turdus Iliacus*), on fine days in the early spring. At the end of April, I have seen the grey linnet perched on the top of *Fucus*-covered stones,—the legitimate haunt of the rock pipit,—singing most vigorously, though whin-covered rocks, its favourite resort, were quite contiguous. I have met with this bird in the month of June when visiting low rocky islets in the sea, the breeding-haunts of terns (*Sternæ*). Occasionally in autumn as well as spring; the true song of the linnet may be heard trilled forth by individuals which form part of a large flock.

To witness a number of grey linnets feeding is a very pleasing sight. Several may be seen in different attitudes, busied in extracting the seed from a single thistle or ragweed, which all the while keeps moving to and fro with their weight. The ear is at the same time gratified with their lively call, which is constantly uttered by one or more of the party. When two or three are engaged on the petty surface of a ragweed-top, and others fly to it, some of the first comers, apparently on the principle, that the world is wide

* In this respect the *lesser redpole* is said by Mr. Selby to differ from the grey linnet, which he considers to be silent on the wing, but in the north of Ireland there is not this distinction between the species.

enough for all, generally move off, and leave it to the later guests; occasionally, indeed, the interruption produces a little buffeting, but this soon terminates; unlike the general *melée* of the sparrow, where the row, originating with a pair, soon becomes general; or the regular "stand-up fight" of the robin, a couple of which, when feeling "blown" after a set-to, literally stop to take breath, after the approved manner of the Fives-Court; and this done, battle again as hard as ever until the victory is decided.

Sir Wm. Jardine, has very pleasingly observed,* that "every one who has lived much in the country, must have often remarked the common linnets congregating towards the close of a fine winter's evening, perched on the summit of some bare tree, pluming themselves in the last rays of the sun, chirruping the commencement of their evening song, and then bursting simultaneously into one general chorus; again resuming their single strains, and again joining, as if happy and rejoicing at the termination of their day's employment." I had daily for a season, the gratification of thus observing them at Wolf-hill, where the effect was heightened, by the black Italian poplars which they alighted on, and dotted with their numbers to the very apex, having pyramidal-formed heads, and accordingly, presenting several pyramids of birds, each giving forth its peal of music. When this ceased, the birds descended to roost in fine large Portugal laurels, growing beneath and around the trees. The time, &c., of their resorting to these poplars was noted on a few occasions during one season:—"On Feb. 16th, a great number appeared at four o'clock; on the 9th of March, kept up their strain until half-past 5; March 30th, did the same until half-past six, and though their numbers have become much thinned, 120 were reckoned. So late as the 5th of May some came in flocks to roost; fifteen were observed in company this evening." During the last few winters, grey linnets have attracted much attention at the Botanic Garden of Belfast, by coming in several hundreds every evening to roost. They frequent, in the manner already described, the black Italian poplars, which here, as at Wolf-hill, are preferred to all other trees. This

* Note to his edition of Wilson's American Ornithology.

preference does not arise merely from the superior loftiness of these trees, but has a 'deeper seat,' to which the fine evergreen shrubs at their base may fairly lay claim:—in their umbrageous shelter the birds warmly repose during the long winter night. In wild districts, I have remarked that they roost among the more lowly furze or whins.

In the north of Ireland the whin is the greylinnet's favourite plant for building in, next to which, the hawthorn may be ranked, whether in a hedge or growing singly. It is likewise partial in the breeding season, and during summer, to the wild hill-sides in the chalk or limestone districts of the north-east of the island, where there is a profusion of humble underwood, as the various species of rose, bramble, &c. On the 1st of September, I have seen birds with the red on the breast as bright as in June. This is a favourite cage-bird in the north of Ireland, and consequently is much sought after by bird-catchers, who call it simply *grey*, or *whin-grey*.

THE LESSER REDPOLE.*

Linaria minor, Ray.
Fringilla linaria, Linn.

Is found from north to south of Ireland.

Although probably resident everywhere, it is more plentiful in the north, but from the nature of its haunts, is not commonly known like the greylinnet. The bird is mentioned in the Fauna of Cork, as a rare winter visitant, but further observation will doubtless evince its more frequent appearance. In Kerry, Mr. R. Chute, considers the species so rare, that he has particularized the year of its occurrence in the same manner, as he has those in which the snow bunting and mountain finch were found. At the end of May or beginning of June, the lesser redpole has been observed on the banks of the Blackwater, in the county of Waterford, and was presumed to breed there,† which it is known

* *Redpoll* it should rather be, but as authors have generally used the above orthography, it is adopted.

† Ball.

to do about Clonmel.* Some authors state, that in England it breeds only in the north.†

Mr. Selby, who treats most pleasingly of this species,—as he always does when not confining himself to a brief description,—mentions it as resorting to breed in localities of a wild character. In addition to such, in the neighbourhood of Belfast, the most cultivated and improved districts are frequented for that purpose. In the year 1845, it has built in large Portugal laurels in the Botanic Garden, and in common laurels near to a dwelling-house in the outskirts of the town. A nest in the former place, was composed of moss, grass, and a cotton-like substance, and contained five eggs on the 6th of May. In the latter, the pair commenced building on the 4th of May; the nest was made of moss and cotton,‡ strengthened with stems of withered grass, and lined with hair; it was completed on the 8th; next day one egg was laid; on the 12th, four had been deposited; on the 23rd, the young made their appearance; on the 4th of June they left the nest, being then able to fly well, and almost as large as their parents.§ It likewise builds about gardens, and an humble goose-berry bush was once the chosen receptacle of the nest, which was said to have been lined with feathers. Hawthorn trees are also chosen; from which circumstance, it is called by bird-fanciers in the north of Ireland *thorn-grey*, in contradiction to the common linnet, named *whin-grey*, on account of selecting the whin for its nest. In the picturesque and wooded glens, this bird has chiefly come under my own notice, and built in the *Coniferæ*, the larch-fir appearing to be the favourite species for the purpose. "It breeds in the counties of Armagh and Tyrone. In the summer of 1844, two

* Davis.

† Mr. Hewitson, however, in the later edition of his beautiful work on the Eggs of British Birds, remarks:—"Mr. Wolley, who lives at Beeston, near Nottingham, informs me that it breeds in his neighbourhood, and that his brother has found its nest near Rugby, in Warwickshire. Mr. Briggs also meets with it near Melbourne, in Derbyshire." p. 166.

‡ A cotton-mill is in the vicinity. Sir Wm. Jardine remarks, that the down of willow-catkins seems to be an indispensable material. Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 289.

§ These particulars were noted by an accurate observer, Mr. Darragh, curator of the Belfast Museum.

nests were found in the garden of Tallaniskin glebe; one in a currant bush, the other among the branches of a honeysuckle not more than four feet from the ground: they go farther south in winter." *

During the season, the lesser redpole is dispersed very generally, often in small flocks, consisting of about twenty birds, over plantations from the highest on the mountain-side, to those which are but little elevated above high-water mark. The late John Montgomery, Esq., of Locust Lodge, near Belfast, at that season has remarked it occupied in feeding upon the seeds of the tree-primrose (*Œnothera*) and crown-imperial (*Fritillaria imperialis*) in his garden. A friend once noted his having on the 1st of February, observed ten of these birds so busily engaged consuming the seeds of the alder, that they were not disturbed by some horses and carts passing close beneath them: they gave no attention to his own presence, thus enabling him to perceive that two or three of them had the pretty pinkish breasts and red foreheads of spring, though all the others were deficient in that plumage. It were idle to dwell longer on this interesting bird:—its partiality to the seed of the alder; the varied and graceful attitudes so full of animation and life assumed by a group when feeding; and the indifference shown to the close proximity of man at such times; all these traits having been fully expatiated on by Mr. Selby.

THE MOUNTAIN LINNET.

Twite.

Linaria flavirostris, Linn. (sp.)
Fringilla „ „
—— *montium*, Gmel.

Is found from north to south of Ireland, and is resident.

It is one of the least known of our indigenous *Fringillidæ*, and was considered by Mr. Templeton as a "winter visitant" only. In the heath-clad mountains of the more northern parts of the island

* Rev. George Robinson.

this species annually breeds, and from its occurrence there at mid-winter, I am disposed to believe that severity of weather only, drives it to the lower grounds. In the north of Ireland it is distinguished from the other linnets (*Linariæ*) by the name of "*Heather*-grey." These birds may be seen every winter in large flocks about Clough, in the county of Antrim, where they chiefly frequent the stubble-fields in the neighbourhood of the mountains.* They are said to be common about Armagh in winter; I have had specimens from the county of Fermanagh; they have been obtained in Kerry;† and have been shot in the middle of February in company with the grey linnet on an island in Wexford harbour, where "they seemed partial to the vicinity of high-water mark, and had taken up their quarters among the grassy banks."‡ In the north they frequently resort to the sea-side in winter, and associate with the grey linnet.

A person to whom the species is well known, has often had its nests on the heathery top of the Knockagh mountain near Carrickfergus. They were generally placed in the heath, but in some instances were built near to the ground in dwarfed whins, which grew among the heath.

A venerable sporting friend has always observed these birds about their nests (placed in "tufts of heather"), when breaking his dogs on the Belfast mountains preparatory to grouse-shooting. The Rev. G. Robinson has met with them breeding in bogs about Stewartstown, county of Tyrone; in the parish of Tullaniskin; and around Churchill, county of Armagh;—also, at the base of the Dublin mountains. It is common and breeds in the counties of Cork § and Tipperary.‖

The Mealy Redpole (*Linota canescens*, Gould. sp.) has not come under my notice in Ireland, but probably, visits, this island. Little attention has yet been directed to it as a species distinct from the lesser redpole. The localities named by Mr. Yarrell, in which it has

* Mr. J. R. Garrett. † Mr. Wm. Andrews. ‡ Mr. Poole.

§ Mr. Robert Warren, juur. This gentleman found a nest containing eggs in a furze-bush, within a few feet of a much frequented public road at Carrigalina. He placed one of the eggs under a canary, that brought it out, at the same time with her own brood. She took the greatest care of the young linnet, which acquired the note of its foster-parent. ‖ Mr. Davis.

been obtained in England, are towards the south-east. Near Edinburgh and Bathgate,—where single individuals were obtained,—are the only Scottish localities mentioned by Sir Wm. Jardine and Mr. Macgillivray.

THE BULLFINCH.

Pyrrhula vulgaris, Temm.
Loxia pyrrhula, Linn.

Is one of those birds met with in the four quarters of the island, and probably in every county; but at the same time is rather scarce.

Mr. Selby remarks, that it is "common in all the wooded districts of these islands." This will not however apply to Ireland. In many of the *artificially* wooded districts, the bullfinch is either not to be found at all, or only known as an occasional visitant; but where an extent of natural wood remains, and there is sufficient growth of the more shrubby trees, it may be looked for, but cannot be reckoned on with certainty. In some picturesque and extensive glens in the county of Antrim, near Belfast, this bird was common so long as the hazel and holly of natural growth maintained their ground, but as these were swept away, the bullfinch deserted such localities, as abodes, and "few and far between" are now even its temporary visits. In the neighbouring county of Down, it finds a home in sequestered situations where the hazel predominates—as at Tollymore Park, the Wood House, near Rosstrevor, &c.,—and in this shrubby tree, commonly builds. In "nature's wild domain," the bullfinch looks eminently beautiful, and can be admired without the alloy associated with its appearance in the garden or the orchard, where it proves so destructive by eating the buds of the fruit trees.* Its call-note and song have generally met with little admiration from the historians of the species, but being sweetly plaintive, they are to me extremely pleasing. These birds came in small numbers † in two successive winters of late years to an unusual locality;—a little garden apart

* It has been remarked, both in the north and south of the island, to be very partial to feeding on the buds of the sloe or black-thorn (*Prunus spinosa*).

† I have rarely heard of more than from 20 to 30 birds being seen in a flock during winter.

from plantations or shelter of any kind at the edge of Belfast bay, a short distance from the town. The attraction was seeds, of which those of the tree-primrose (*Œnothera*) seemed to be preferred. The birds were very tame in all kinds of weather, but, as may be supposed, more particularly so during frost. Mr. Poole mentions the food of the bullfinch as consisting, in winter, of a variety of buds, of which those of the larch are much eaten,—in autumn, of the seeds of ragweeds (*Senecio Jacobæa*), &c. Small seeds were the only food in the stomachs of a few bullfinches which came under my observation in winter—they contained fragments of stone.

Mr. Selby* and Mr. Knapp give very interesting accounts of the bullfinch from personal observation, and particularly with reference to the plants which it attacks.

Different species of birds have, in the course of these pages, been mentioned, as occasionally becoming black. The bullfinch, when caged and fed much on hemp-seed, is particularly liable to become so. Many years ago at Edenderry, near Belfast, where a pair of bullfinches had been for some time kept, the male died, and the female, whose grief for his loss was very evident, soon afterwards moulted and assumed a full garb of black. Such being considered equivalent to the widow's "weeds," was looked upon as almost supernatural: and more particularly so, when after a year of mourning she, at moulting time, threw them partially off, and exhibited some white feathers in her wings. I have known a piping bullfinch to be kept about twenty years, and at the expiration of that time to be in as good health as ever. Its age when purchased was not remembered.

THE PINE BULLFINCH.

Pyrrhula enucleator, Linn. (sp.)
Loxia „ „

Has, according to the following brief testimony, been once obtained.

In the manuscript journal of that eminent naturalist, John Tem-

* In Illustrations of British Ornithology, and The Naturalist.

pleton, Esq., is the following note:—"December the 20th, 1819. Yesterday heard from Mr. Montgomery of Belfast [a discriminating ornithologist], that Mr. Bradford had received a specimen of the *Loxia Enucleator* which was shot at the Cave-hill [vicinity of Belfast], and on showing the figure in the Naturalist's Miscellany, he recognised it to be the bird."

This species is an extremely rare visitant to Great Britain, but has been met with both in England and Scotland.

THE CROSSBILL.

Loxia curvirostra, Linn.

Has long been known as an occasional visitant to Ireland: —it has bred here of late years.

As much popular interest attaches to this bird, on account of the remarkable form of its bill, and the imagined rarity of its occurrence, I shall give particular notes on the subject.

In Harris's History of the County of Down (1744), it is remarked of crossbills, that "many of them were seen at Waringstown in 1707." Smith, in his History of Cork (1749), observes, that "these birds have been seen in this county, but are rare." Rutty, in his Natural History of Dublin (1772), says of the crossbill:—"It has been seen at Ireland's Eye, and we have had several flights of them to the counties of Wicklow and Dublin, particularly in 1714." In the Memoirs and Correspondence of the late Sir J. E. Smith, we find the following passage, in a letter from Mr. Caldwell, dated Dublin, Feb. 3rd, 1802:—"The winter here has been severe. * * * Vast flights of crossbills, *Loxia curvirostra*, I believe, made their appearance the latter end of August, and staid till the beginning of October. They made great havoc in the orchards; they never ate the apple, but cut it to pieces, and picked out the pippins. They came first over to the county of Cork, then proceeded to Waterford, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Wexford, Wicklow, and Dublin, but no further north. * * * They were observed here, I am told, before the hard

frost, and once since; and now this time, when there certainly has been severer frost than usual," vol. ii. p. 153. Mr. R. Ball informed me in 1842, that during his residence at Youghal, this species was known to him as occurring but once in the south, upwards of thirty years ago, when it committed great devastation in the orchards: its appearance in the south of the county of Cork, about that period, has been reported to me by others, who state that it was looked upon as an extraordinary rarity;—probably the same flight of birds is alluded to by all. M'Skimmin, in his History of Carrickfergus, mentions a flock being seen there in July, 1811. Mr. Ensor, in an article contributed to the 6th volume of the Magazine of Natural History (p. 81), dated Ardress, county of Armagh, remarks:—"There was a flight of these birds in my plantations for weeks in 1813 or 1814."* In 1821, when crossbills were so abundant in Scotland, they visited Ireland also, and some were killed about Belfast. A venerable friend has from his early years known them as occasional winter visitants to the neighbourhood of this town, and has captured them, when feeding, by means of fishing-rods smeared with bird-lime.

Since my own attention has been given to the subject, the crossbill

* *Loxia coccothraustes* is the scientific name applied to the bird referred to, but from the observation that it is significantly called "cross-beak," it seems to me warrantable to conclude that *Loxia curvirostra* is meant.

Mr. Robert Millen has mentioned to me, that near Ballyclare (co. Antrim), about the year 1814, he became possessed of a crossbill by flinging a stone at a bird in a larch fir, which he believed from its colour to be a green-linnet. It was only stunned by the blow of the stone, and soon recovered. He kept it as a pet bird for about nine months, and provided fir cones as food, from which the seeds were adroitly extracted.

The Rev. Dr. Walsh, in his work entitled "A Residence at Constantinople," mentions his having obtained a crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) just after its being snared in a tree near that city, and states, that "it became as familiar as a parrot, sat on my shoulder while I wrote, and whistled to me for food. I discovered that it [the species?] particularly frequented Turkish cemeteries, and was most commonly met with among the cypress trees. I collected, therefore, some of the cypress cones, and whenever he whistled, I presented him with one. He took it with great dexterity in one of his claws, and holding it up, he hopped to his perch on the other leg. He then split open with his cross beak the tough divisions of the cone with a force, and got out the seeds with a dispatch, that mandibles of any other construction could never accomplish. I kept this familiar and interesting bird for several months, till a rapacious kite, hovering over the palace garden, made a stoop, and destroyed it. I called it Νερουπολι, its modern Greek name, and it answered to the sound by a whistle." vol. ii. p. 111.

is recorded either in my notes or otherwise, as occurring at the following times and places :—

Year.	Day.	Month or Season.	Locality.	Observations.
1828		December.	County of Wicklow.	
,,	26	,,	Belfast, co. Antrim.	Winter 1828–29, not numerous.
		Winter.	Co. Tyrone or Armagh	
1829–30		,,	Belfast.	Winter 1829–30, ditto.
,,		January.	County of Wicklow.	
1831			Co. Waterford.	Said to be very destructive to orchards near the city.
1833		July.	Belfast.	Several in red plumage obtained.
1835	22	December.	Crumlin, co. Antrim.	
,,	,,	,,	Lurgan, co. Armagh.	Winter of 1835–36.
1836	1	February.	Tandragee. ,,	
,,		,,	Belfast.	
,,		Summer.	Tollymore Park, Down.	A pair bred, and frequently seen with their three young by the gamekeeper.
1837		End June.	Dargle, co. Wicklow.	Many seen; two which were shot came under my notice.
1837–38		Winter.	West of Ireland.	
		Oct.–Mar.	Co. Dublin.	Numbers seen, and some obtained.
		Dec.	Portglenone, co. Antr.	Flocks seen, ,, ,,
	18	January.	Ballibrado, co. Tipper.	ditto. ditto.
		Jan. & Feb.	Hillsborough Park, Finnebrogue and Tollymore Park, well wooded demesnes in the co. Down.	
		February.	Co. Carlow & Kildare.	Numbers killed.
1838		Spring.	Portarlington, Queen's county.	Several shot here. About Mountmellick (same co.) abundant a few years ago (1831?); very destructive to apples.
1838				*Said* to have bred at Delgany, and the Vale of Avoca (co. Wicklow) and in the county of Meath, but no particulars furnished.
1839	20	January.	Antrim.	In this or the following winter obtained in Hillsborough Park, Down.
1841		Late in autumn.	Co. Wexford.	Flocks seen and some killed.
1842		Autumn.	,,	ditto.
1845	4	March.	Between Killough and Dundrum, co. Down.	ditto.
1846		Feb. & Mar.	Tollymore Park, Down.	ditto.

In most of the preceding instances, these birds were seen feeding on the cones of the larch fir and common pine (Scotch fir), more especially on the former, with the seeds of which I have found their stomachs filled:—once only were there any fragments of stone in them. They generally attracted attention, by the noise produced in splitting open the cones, compared by some persons to that made by the breaking of sticks. When at Tollymore Park in June, 1838, the game-keeper informed me, that in the preceding winter, crossbills were abundant there, so many as fifty being sometimes seen in a flock. He pointed out a larch-fir, upon which he and a gentleman visiting the park, saw fourteen or fifteen engaged in extracting the seed, some of the birds being at the time but a few yards above the spectators' heads, and sending the cones to the ground in numbers;—he remarked that they are generally very tame when feeding. He had seen them picking at the cones of the various species of firs and pines in the park, and particularized the spruce-fir, as one on which they were so employed.*

As the *breeding* of the crossbill is particularly noticed by Mr. Robert Davis, junr., of Clonmel, his observations on the species generally, are here brought together:—"About the 18th of Jan., 1838, a flock of these birds appeared at Ballibrado, near Cahir, and five of them were killed: they were very tame, and were observed to feed like parrots, holding the fir-cones in one claw. On the 16th of August, the same year, four crossbills were thence sent to me, where they still continued in considerable numbers. I cannot hear of their occurrence anywhere else, except in the neighbouring demesne of Kilcommon; two more were sent to me early in September, but like the others, were much damaged, as, in consequence of their tameness, the person who shot them fired

* My informant states, that about thirty years ago crossbills came "in thousands" to the plantations at Dumfries House, in Ayrshire, the seat of the Marquis of Bute, "and did not leave a cone upon the firs." The year 1821 is probably alluded to, as these birds are reported to have been then particularly numerous in other parts of Scotland, and some parts of England. Mr. Macgillivray (British Birds, vol. i. p. 425), gives a most graphic account of a flock of some hundreds he met with in the east of Scotland, feeding upon the fruit or seed of the mountain-ash (*Pyrus aucuparia*).

from too short a distance. They appeared to be adult males; males passing from the red state into the adult; young males just getting a few red feathers; and females (?), in the brownish-grey state: they seemed to be moulting rapidly. On the 11th of January, 1839, they were still to be seen at Ballibrado, where they have been all the winter, and when noticed about a week before, appeared to have paired. I am of opinion that they bred here last year, on account of their appearance very early, accompanied by a number of young, and from the destruction of the cones of the spruce-fir having been noticed throughout the year." On the 18th of May, 1839, my correspondent transmitted the skins of two specimens for my examination and remarked,—"from ten to twenty crossbills have remained all the winter, and up to the present time at Ballibrado, but, though some search was made, no nest was discovered. About five or six weeks since, two or more clutches of young birds were seen accompanying the old ones, who were observed feeding them. The young bird sent was shot in the act of taking food from an old male; I received it early in April; the other bird sent varies a little in colour from most specimens, and was shot about three weeks before that time. The young one had every appearance of a nestling, feet soft and weak, bill not strong, and a great number of the large feathers not fully produced.*" On the 18th of July of the same year, it was stated that crossbills had not been seen at Ballibrado for two months.

Notes on the plumage, and sometimes full descriptions from the recent specimens which came under my examination, were drawn up; but it is sufficient to observe here, that they were in every state from that put on at the first moult, to maturity; by far the greater number were in the bright red plumage: one only, (that already noticed,) displayed the markings of the young previous to the first moult.

* This bird is of adult size: the head, back, and rump, or whole upper plumage, is yellowish green, with a dark olive centre to each feather, this dark marking occupying more of the feathers anteriorly than towards the tail; the entire under plumage is yellowish-white, with an olive-brown streak down the centre of each feather; tail and larger wing-feathers dark brown, with the outer margin yellowish-green.—W. T.

Authors, generally, report the crossbill as arriving in Great Britain in June, but it has usually been a late autumnal, or a winter, visitant to Ireland, leaving the country again, early in the spring, like other birds of passage.* Mr. Yarrell's remark with reference to England, that crossbills "were more abundant during the greater part of 1836, 1837, and 1838 than was known for some years before,"—might it not be said, than was ever known before in three successive years?—applies to Ireland also, as shown in the preceding notes. In endeavouring to account for the cause of the more frequent visits of crossbills to the British Islands of late years, we should know in the first place, if any change has occurred in their metropolis, or the chief quarter whence they come; but, ignorant of this, we can only look at home, and see if there be any attraction for them now, that the country was deficient in before. Sir Wm. Jardine observes: "In the south of Scotland, at least, where an immense extent of young pine timber has been planted within thirty years, the crossbill has undoubtedly become more common, and we know now remains through the year."† In Ireland likewise, plantations including the *Coniferæ*, but above all, the larch, have greatly increased within the same period, and may be the means of prolonging the stay of crossbills, or inducing them to remain occasionally throughout the year. And as somewhat corroboratory of this, it may be remarked, that plentiful as these birds were in latter years, we have heard but little of damage done by them to orchards, as in earlier times, the seed of the *Coniferæ* having generally afforded abundance of food. Still, I cannot but think that the primary

* The crossbill appears among the "Irregular Birds of Passage," in a paper by M. Duval-Jouve on the Migratory Birds of Provence, published in the Zoologist, for Oct. 1845. It is there stated, that "this bird is one of the first that arrives here from the north. It is at the end of June and beginning of July that the migration takes place. They are not seen every year, and a very long time often elapses between their visits. * * * They appeared abundantly in 1831, again in 1834, some few in 1837, and in great numbers in 1842. * * * I do not think these birds pass the Mediterranean; they remain too long in Provence to justify such a conclusion. We meet with them in the summer, sometimes even in the autumn, and they disappear in the winter and spring to nestle I know not where. They sojourn in our large pine-forests."—p. 1115.

† Naturalist's Library, British Birds, vol. ii. p. 340 (1839).

cause of their more frequent migrations, must be looked for in their princial abode. A friend of excellent judgment, to whom this idea was mentioned, is, however, rather inclined to consider crossbills as a wandering tribe, having no proper home, but who pitch their tent, and take up their residence at a place just so long as it suits them, without contemplating a return to any particular region.

I have not had the gratification of seeing crossbills in a wild state in Ireland; but early in September, 1837, my attention was directed to them by Mr. Selby and Sir Wm. Jardine, as they were on wing from one plantation to another, in the demesne at Twizell, and at Chillingham Park, Northumberland. On the 9th of Oct., 1847, when in a fine wood of oaks and beeches, adjoining the beautiful village of Southborough, near Tunbridge Wells, I was attracted by the peculiar call-note of some bird that I had not before heard, and discovered that it proceeeded from this species, one of which was seen perched on the summit of a tall oak tree: —its bill looked very large, from a considerable distance.

Bewick and Yarrell, in their respective histories of British Birds, treat us with entertaining and copious accounts of the appearance of crossbills in England in the olden time, when like a more potent enemy—"they were attacked with slings and cross-bows," valiantly "never thinking of flying off till some of them, stricken by stones, or apples, or leaden bullets, fell dead from the trees." The grand point of view in which birds were considered at that period (1593), is not omitted to be mentioned, as in one account it is stated, that "their flesh was sufficiently savoury and delicate," and in the other, that "they were very good meate."

The Parrot Crossbill (*Loxia pytiopsittacus*) is included in Templeton's Catalogue of Irish Birds, from the supposed occurrence of the species in one instance. A coloured drawing of the specimen, of natural size, was fortunately made by that accomplished naturalist. It represents the *L. curvirostra* with the point of the lower mandible not reaching beyond the profile of the upper. At the foot of the drawing, *L. pytiopsittacus* is followed by a note of doubt, which does not appear in the printed catalogue. The bird was shot by Rainey Maxwell,

Esq., at Grenville, near Belfast, in May, 1802. Very few individuals of this species have been obtained in England or Scotland.

THE TWO-BANDED CROSSBILL.
European White-winged Crossbill.

Loxia bifasciata, Nilsson.

Has once been obtained.

The first notice of the occurrence of this species in the British islands, is that of Templeton, who communicated to the Linnean Society of London a note of one having been "shot at Grenville, near Belfast, January the 11th, 1802." An extract at p. 276, informs us, that the common crossbill was particularly numerous in the southern half of Ireland that season. M. Le Baron De Selys Longchamps, in his excellent "Faune Belge," is of opinion, that the bird called *L. leucoptera,* in works on British Ornithology, is instead the *L. bifasciata,* which has been until lately confounded with it: he describes the differences between them (p. 77), and figures the heads and bills of the two species. The latter has been obtained during winter, in Sweden, Germany, and Belgium: the former is a North-American species, which has been killed in England within the last few years.* As Mr. Templeton made a coloured drawing of the specimen, I was desirous that this should be seen by M. De Selys, on his visit to Belfast in the autumn of 1844, but unfortunately it had been taken by Mr. Robert Templeton, along with many other delineations and papers of his father's to Ceylon. The drawing has, however, by the kind attention of my friend just named, been since sent to me from that island, and proves the Irish specimen to have been the *L. bifasciata,* as described and figured by M. De Selys: it represents the bird of a greenish-olive on the head and back, with dark-brownish markings; rump yellow; tail-feathers blackish, bordered with yellow; entire under plumage yellow, with dark streaks; two conspicuous

* Noticed by Yarrell in the Zoological Proceedings, since the 2nd edit. of his Brit. Birds was published in 1845.

white bands across the wings, and the wing-feathers generally (but not all) tipped with white. The form of the bill is identically that of *L. bifasciata*.

But few individuals of the white-winged crossbill have been obtained in England or Scotland.

THE STARLING.

Stare.

Sturnus vulgaris, Linn.

Is common, and breeds in many parts of the island.

Montagu remarks of this species, that "many stay with us the whole year; but the vast flocks that are seen in *severe winters* probably migrate to this country [England] in search of food, and return northward in the spring. We have observed continued flights of these birds going westward into Devonshire and Cornwall in hard weather, and their return eastward as soon as the frost breaks up." Mr. Knapp observes that,—"towards autumn the broods unite and form large flocks; but those prodigious flights with which in *some particular years* we are visited, especially in parts of those districts formerly called the 'fen-counties,' are *probably* an accumulation from other countries." The Bishop of Norwich, in his 'Familiar History of Birds,' gives as his opinion, "that they are partially migratory, quitting one part of the kingdom for another;" and Sir Wm. Jardine states, that "in many parts of Scotland where they do not breed, they are migratory, appearing in autumn and spring."

It is now many years since Mr. Templeton, in his valuable 'Naturalists' Report' published in the Belfast Magazine, called attention to the regular migration of starlings into Ireland.

In that portion of the north of the island with which I am myself best acquainted, there is nothing irregular in the migration of starlings; they do not await any severity of weather; and although they may occasionally change their quarters when within the island, yet of all our birds, they present the clearest evidence

of migration, as they are annually observed for several weeks to pour into Ireland from the north, and wing their way southward. To myself they have frequently so appeared, but I prefer giving the more full and satisfactory testimony of trustworthy and intelligent "shore-shooters," three of whom, being consulted, agree upon the subject. They state that the general autumnal migration of stares or stars* (as they are sometimes called) commences towards the middle or end of September, according to the season, and continues daily for about six or eight weeks. So early as the middle of July, a flock was once observed flying southerly in the autumnal course. When the weather is moderate, flocks consisting of from half-a-dozen to two hundred individuals, are seen every morning, coming from the north-east, passing over a point of land where a river enters Belfast bay about a mile from the town, and continuing in the same course until lost to view. They are generally seen only for one and a half, or two hours,—from eight to ten o'clock A.M.,—none appearing before the former hour, and rarely any after the latter, except when the wind is high, and then the flight is protracted until noon; if very stormy, they do not come at all. When they commence migration unusually late in the season, as was the case in 1838, they make up for lost time by an increase of numbers. Thus, they were first seen in that year on the 23rd of October, when they made their appearance at half-past eight o'clock A.M., and continued passing in flocks of from twenty to one and two hundred individuals, until two o'clock. At the season of their earliest appearance, there is daylight between four and five o'clock in the morning, and the fact of their not being seen before eight o'clock, leads to the belief that they have left some distant place at an early hour. On the same morning, the flocks all take the same line of flight, but the direction varies when the wind is sufficiently strong to affect their movements. Those which come within the hours already mentioned, very rarely alight; but when a flock

* Similar abbreviations are in common use among the dealers in birds (living and dead), in the north of Ireland; thus, in grey linnet, chaffinch, green linnet, &c., an economy of words is practised, and the first syllable alone is sufficient to indicate the species. In the same manner, I have in Perthshire heard the *hooded* or grey crow called simply *huddy*.

arrives during the day, it occasionally does so, apparently, from having flown a greater distance than the earlier comers, and found rest and food to be desirable before proceeding farther. The number of birds that come in this course is not very great. The average of five or six flocks seen in a morning perhaps consisted of 250 individuals; the greatest number ever seen in one day probably amounted to 1500; and those altogether seen throughout the migratory period may be estimated at about 15,000. Of my three informants, two lived in the district over which the starlings flew, and consequently had daily opportunities of seeing them in their season. One has indeed done so for the last half-century, and the other was in the habit of going to the place every morning, in the hope that the flocks would pass over within shot, which they often did. In only one instance, did any of these persons see starlings return this way in spring, when, on the 13th of March, a flock appeared passing north-eastward, in the direction whence they come in autumn:—on the 23rd of that month, a flock, consisting of sixty, was once observed by myself, returning by this course. In the middle of March, flocks of starlings have occurred to me in unusual localities, and were supposed to be moving northward on migration. During the first week of April, 1837, large flocks were seen at "unaccustomed places," in Down and Antrim, having doubtless been kept from crossing the channel, by the prevalence of the north-east wind and very cold weather.

The autumnal flights of these birds can be traced as coming from Scotland. Capt. Fayrer, R.N., in a letter dated Portpatrick, October the 23rd, 1831, and published in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London, remarks, that "very large flocks of starlings have arrived within the last few days. They start before sunrise and steer to the southward." I have had circumstantial evidence of this fact myself, as some years ago, when shooting at the latter end of October, about Ballantrae, in Ayrshire, flocks of these birds were numerous, where, in a subsequent season, from the 12th of August to the middle of September, very few individuals only, which built in the neighbourhood, could be observed.

When my friend Mr. Richard Langtry was proceeding from Belfast to London by sea some years ago, and again when returning thence, many starlings flew on board off Cornwall, and northwards during stormy weather in November and December. They, apparently from fatigue, permitted themselves to be seized by the sailors on the rigging, rather than attempt to escape by flight.

These birds very rarely stop anywhere in the vicinity of Belfast on their southward migration; but a low-lying tract of marshy meadows, when flooded by excessive rain, has occasionally tempted the latest comers to remain a few days, and till the end of December, 1833, a flock of about 200, frequented a district at the base of the mountains, three miles from the town. In the low-lying marshy tracts westward of these mountains, towards Lough Neagh, and northward, towards Antrim and Templepatrick, they may be seen during winter; until the middle of March, large flocks have come under my observation. About Belfast bay, starlings are rarely seen except at the migratory period; but during frost and snow in January, 1823, I remarked them there. The only instance in which one of the shore-shooters before mentioned, met with these birds about the bay in winter, was some years ago during heavy snow after Christmas, when they appeared in immense flocks. So numerous were they, that the little grassy patches, rising above the ooze near the shore, could not contain them, and a portion of the flock kept hovering above their more fortunate brethren, who had found a resting-place. On such petty islets of green-sward, or on heaps of "sleech-grass" (*Zostera marina*) only, did he ever see them alight;—the sand or bare beach was always avoided. Like the snow bunting, the starling has however, of late, become more common in the neighbourhood of Belfast. During the greater part of the winter of 1844–45, a moderate sized flock frequented Dargan's Island, adjacent to the quays, and alluded to at p. 240.

Although the numbers seen about Belfast are on their way southward, the extensive marshy tracts of the most northern counties (Antrim, Londonderry, and Donegal) display throughout

the winter their hosts of migratory starlings.* Mr. Knapp remarks, that they sometimes associate, but not cordially, with fieldfares (*Turdus pilaris*). Smith, in his History of Cork, quaintly observes:—"They company with redwings and fieldfares, yet do not go off with them." The Rev. G. M. Black informs me, that at Newtown-Crommelin, in the county of Antrim, where they are in immense flocks throughout the winter, they are always associated with these birds. It is interesting to observe the different mode of flight of the three species, when roused from the same feeding ground; the fieldfares and redwings taking their departure in a loose flock; the starlings separating from them, and keeping in a compact body. These birds feed much in company with rooks.

Mr. R. Ball remarks, that "starlings seem to have fixed on our celebrated round towers as favourite nestling-places," and certainly these buildings are admirably suited to such a purpose, there is so little danger of molestation.† Ruins generally, old trees, rocks,‡

* In parts of the county of Cork they appear in large flocks in winter, where rarely one is seen in summer. Mr. Poole, writing from the county of Wexford, remarks:—"The immense numbers of these birds to be met with here in winter, cannot possibly be bred in this country. I should think that we owed nine-tenths of the flocks to migration. October the 6th and 7th are the earliest dates at which I have observed flocks of these birds, and the 27th of March, the latest. They feed in company with lapwings in low grounds, and during inundations, in the neighbourhood of water, sometimes almost in it. A solitary stare will sometimes be seen in company with a whole flock of lapwings. They are very partial to the vicinity of sheep, and often feed close to the heels of these animals, I suspect on the insects attracted by their warmth. They are pugnacious, often leaping at each other like game-cocks. Large flights pass over us every morning on their way to their feeding grounds, and come back the same way."

† Mr. Hyndman, when visiting Tory Island, off the north of Donegal, at the beginning of August, 1845, saw a dozen of these birds about some loose rocks or "boulders," which they were said to frequent generally, except at the breeding season, when they resort to the round tower to build.

‡ When at the peninsula of "the Horn" (co. Donegal), and at the largest of the South Islands of Arran, I was informed that they build in the lofty precipices which rise above the ocean. At the latter locality, they also nidificate in ruined buildings. In Dr. J. D. Marshall's memoir on the Statistics and Natural History of the Island of Rathlin, published in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy in 1836, it is remarked of the starling:—"This is one of the most common birds in Rathlin. It is found over the greater part of the island, but principally about Church Bay, where the houses are more numerous, and where there are a few trees and shrubs. In July they were assembled in flocks of from one to two hundred, dispersing themselves over the fields and along the sea-shores. They frequented the more rocky parts of the pasture-fields. * * * * They build among the rocks." From the "Fauna of Cork" we learn that they breed "plentifully in the rocks at Renayne Bay, &c."

and chimneys, are resorted to for building. These birds, it may be remarked, are not generally spread over Ireland, as they are over England in the breeding-season, but are confined to comparatively few favourite localities, which are chiefly in pasture districts. Within the memory of old persons, they built annually in the steeple of St. Ann's church, Belfast, and in other places within and about the town, but for a long period ceased to do so. They have within the last few years returned.

Mr. W. Darragh informs me of three instances of the starling's having nests near Belfast of late. Once, in a fine old cherry-tree in an orchard at Ballynafeigh, and twice — in the summers of 1844 and 1845—building in an ash tree standing singly in a pasture-field at Seymour Hill. The nest was placed in a hole within the tree, and both the aperture and the cavity were so small, that persons enlarged them, not on the bird's account, but on their own, that they might procure the eggs, for which there was such a competition, that they were carried off almost as soon as laid, and the poor birds were not allowed to rear a brood in either year. The species was such a novelty in the district, that its nest was known to every one, and the young birds in such requisition, that a brood reared by their legitimate parents would have gone but a short way in supplying the demand. Besides, as every one feared that his neighbour might be the fortunate possessor of the prize, the eggs were abstracted, and placed in the nests of blackbirds and thrushes, of which species each bird-fancier had nests unknown to his neighbours :—but in no instance did the young "come out."* Two nests were known to be built in the town, in the summer of 1848. One was in an aperture at the top of the gable wall of the loftiest house in Wellington Place, a situation taken possession of by the birds at the end of March. The other was placed in a hole in the fifth story of a large occupied flax-mill. It was near the roof, within reach of

* The same informant likewise mentions, that at a place between Dundalk and Ardee (county of Louth), and near to Fane Valley, there is a small building resembling a dove-cot, erected on the roof of a house for starlings to build in. They frequent it in such numbers for the purpose, that they may be compared to bees flying backward and forward to their hive. He saw them in the breeding season for three or four years ;—his last visit being in 1841.

the hand from an upper window, but fortunately the birds were not molested, and the young escaped in safety.*

Massareene deer-park † and Shane's Castle Park, both well wooded and extensive demesnes situated on the banks of Lough Neagh, and far "remote from public haunt," ‡ are now their regular nesting-places. || Ruined castles, both in marine and inland localities, in the north of the island, where not very many years ago they built, have of late, without any apparent cause, been deserted; and the same has been reported to me with respect to districts in the south.

The starling has been well described by authors, as one of the most sociable of birds. Every month in the year it may be observed in flocks, though in May and June but few individuals, comparatively, are seen congregated in these islands. At the end of May, I have observed nearly fifty in company in the Regent's Park, London: but in Holland, I have at the same period of the year remarked considerable flocks feeding in the pastures, and flying from tree to tree on the road-sides. At the end of June and very early in July, large flocks are not unfrequent:—around Penrith, in the north of England; in the neighbourhood of Birmingham; and in the very different scenery of the South Islands of Arran, off Galway bay; I have observed flocks at this season.

* In Dunn's Ornithologist's Guide to Orkney and Shetland, we are told that the starling "frequently builds its nest in the walls of the houses so low that it may be easily reached with the hand, yet it is seldom disturbed by the people," p. 81.

† May 29, 1836. I remarked nine starlings associating together here, and about the same time, saw a single bird hastening, its bill being filled with food, to its mate or young. From the 6th of June to the second week of July, according to the season, young starlings have been observed by the Bishop of Norwich to be able to leave their birth-place in company with their parents.

‡ This observation, correct though it be, may seem strange to persons who have at this season observed the starling about the parks of London, including the much-frequented St. James's Park. When in the Green Park, on the 19th of May, 1843, I remarked four starlings, at half-past six o'clock in the evening, fly singly, with food in their bills, to the tops of the houses north of the park, in the chimnies of which they probably had young. Mr. Richard Taylor, F. L. S., mentioned in a note to my paper on this species, published in the Annals of Natural History, that starlings still frequent the precincts of the Charterhouse, in the centre of London.

|| Starlings have been observed at Dromedaragh (co. Antrim), busily occupied in and about the old nests of rooks; but whether they were intent on building or food, was not ascertained.

I have been more than once entertained by witnessing starlings spring into the air with lapwings, so much their superiors in size, and guide their course; as on the earth, the puny ass leads strings of camels in the East. I have thus seen twenty starlings lead about two hundred lapwings, backward and forward for a long time.

The most interesting feature in the starling is its beautiful mode of flight before roosting for the night. It is very rarely that such a sight can be observed in the vicinity of Belfast. But on October the 24th, 1838, I had the gratification of witnessing a flock consisting of about two hundred, going through their beautiful evolutions, preparatory to roosting on a bank of *Arundo phragmitis* at the side of the river Lagan, near Stranmillis. They several times swept down from a great height in the air, almost vertically, to the reeds, and, though the flock in each instance seemed to lose some of its numbers there, the great body sprang up again to a considerable altitude, and renewed its elegant manœuvres. Every time they descended to the reeds, the stoop was made from the highest range of flight: when passing over at half that elevation, and they wheeled downwards, they never drooped so low as the reeds. At twenty-five minutes past four o'clock they had all alighted. Concealed by a high hedge, I had the opportunity of watching them from a short distance, and perceived by their flitting from one part of the reeds to another, that they were very restless for some time. In thus changing their quarters they rarely rose above the tops of the *Arundo*, and when at rest, were perched so low down as to be invisible. After alighting, they kept up a very noisy concert, in which no sound like their whistle was heard, but rather a medley different from, and more guttural than, their ordinary chatter.

I have seen small flocks of starlings, on a few other occasions during the time of migration, roosting here, and have remarked single birds perch so high up on the reeds, as to sway them horizontally. These plants were always preferred to trees for roosting in, though the latter of various size, up to the most lofty, were quite contiguous. Their apparent preference to reeds was thus

noted on October the 18th, 1843. When walking about half-past four o'clock on the wooded banks of the Lagan, I observed a small flock of these birds flying in a southerly direction, and, as they were high in the air, concluded that they were migrating southwards. But when returning homewards, half an hour afterwards, the same flock (as it was believed from the number of birds being similar) appeared over the bed of reeds already alluded to, and went to roost there. This place is two miles westward of where they were first seen, in the vicinity of which are no reeds, and it was believed that these plants had been noticed in their flight, and were now resorted to, in preference to trees, as a resting place for the night, which was cold and frosty. By Mr. Wm. Todhunter, late of Portumna, I have been informed, that after a hurricane, in September, 1836 (?), nearly nineteen hundred of these birds were washed ashore on the banks of the Shannon. The reeds in which they placed their trust, were snapped asunder in consequence of their weight. Starlings are stated by Mr. Todhunter to be vastly more numerous during winter than summer in that quarter. This gentleman remarked, that they frequented the same woods, as roosting-places, for two or three winters only: in the course of eight years, during which he lived at Portumna, they thus changed three times.

In *Saunders' Newsletter* of March the 25th, 1845, Mr. R. Ball published the following interesting note:—

"In the mass of thorn trees at the upper end of the Zoological Garden in the Phœnix Park, sleep every night from the end of October to about the end of March, from 150,000 to 200,000 starlings! This enormous number may appear an exaggeration, yet it is the estimate of many observations. When the birds were first observed, they were estimated at from 15,000 to 20,000: but during three years they seemed to have increased tenfold, if not more than this, in the recent frost. The congregating of these birds is very interesting. If an observer will at dusk place himself near the gold-fish pond, he will perceive starlings, first in twos and threes, coming from every point of the compass into the ivy-tangled thorn; presently large numbers, in flocks, will approach; these seem a little more cautious, and make a partial circuit before they, as it were, drop into their roosts, which they do (garrulous birds as they are on other occasions) in perfect silence. They are scarcely located, when some of the main bodies come in sight, consisting of many thousands each; they approach much more slowly than the smaller bodies, and hover and reconnoitre for a con-

siderable time; then all at once drop into their places; there are several of these large bodies, but the largest seems to come from the direction of Lucan. After this detachment (the last of the large ones) has located itself, stragglers only appear, and they come in as long as light enough remains for us to see them. It is most curious to observe starlings in this case, though so very wary in others, placing themselves absolutely within reach of persons walking under the trees; and it is perhaps not less striking, that not one in one hundred of these persons seems to notice them. Great care has been taken to prevent any undue disturbance of the birds in this resting-place, and it is hoped that any person induced by this statement to observe their roosting, will not molest them. The entire silence of the starlings strongly contrasts with the ceaseless noise of a comparatively small number of sparrows, which congregate to sleep in some trees near the bear-pit. A number of blackbirds roost in another part, but they are as nothing compared with the starlings. Fieldfares congregate somewhere near the Viceregal Lodge, it is believed, as they may be observed, flying close to the ground in that direction from various sides, while the starlings are soaring on high towards the Zoological Garden. It is probable that the starlings come from a very great distance to their roosting places; as it would seem to require a very large circuit to supply the enormous number which congregate in the gardens during the early part of this month." Mr. Ball has informed me, that since the starlings came in such numbers to the Zoological Garden, the Blackbirds there have congregated to roost, and that he has seen about fifty together on one tree. Mr. Smith O'Brien, M.P., has told him of a similar starling-roost near his residence, in the county of Limerick, where the number of birds was so immense as greatly to injure the trees on which they perched.

It is most entertaining to witness starlings feeding, so very active and lively are all their movements; not one moment are they still, and well may it be so, for truly they are omnivorous.

The contents of the stomachs of starlings often show, that a great deal of life of various kinds is sacrificed to their appetite, and in quantity, as well as variety of food consumed, they exceed all birds that have come under my observation. From my notes a few examples may be selected. Dec. 17, 1834.—A starling was found to contain five perfect and full-grown specimens of *Bulimus lubricus*, and a *Helix radiatula*; some minute Coleoptera, especially dung-beetles, and numerous insect larvæ; a blade of grass, a few grains of oats, and fragments of gravel.

March 12, 1835.—On opening a starling, thirteen specimens of *Bulimus lubricus* and two *Helices*, together with perfect Coleoptera of different species, and numerous larvæ, were observed.

Dec. 29, 1835.—The stomach of a starling was filled with insects of various kinds, or indeed families, but chiefly Coleoptera, some grain, and the following shells:—twelve perfect adult specimens of *Helix radiatula*, a *H. cellaria*, and a *H. hispida*, (both whole and of ordinary size); with twelve examples of *Bulimus lubricus* nearly all adult and perfect.

Nov. 25, 1836.—Nine starlings examined, contained only the remains of insect

and vegetable food. They were shot together near Lough Neagh. *Clausilia rugosa* and *Limneus fossarius*, with earth-worms and seeds of many kinds, have been found in others.

A caged starling, kept by a person of my acquaintance, when given grapes, swallowed them whole, but always cast up the "stones" or seeds soon afterwards, as it also did the stones of such small cherries as were eaten whole. The flesh of large cherries was picked off the stone. Mr. Richard Taylor added to the preceding notes, when being published in the Annals, that he once had "a starling which was exceedingly fond of calcavella. After having sipped a teaspoonful with avidity, he would dance in an ecstasy of delight, repeating his own name, Jacob."

Mr. Waterton in his Essays on Natural History, treats of the starling in a most interesting manner.

In the Familiar History of Birds and the Journal of a Naturalist, its habits are admirably portrayed: in the former work, the singular flight of a large body before retiring to roost, is described in the most graphic manner. Mr. Knapp correctly observes, that "they seem continually to be running into clusters," which, in the winter season, "brings on them death," as they become thereby a temptation to the fowler; but an instance to the contrary may here be mentioned. A small flock, observed by a shooter of my acquaintance, alighted in a field where his cow was grazing, and clustering on the ground about her head, kept pace with her movements, watching, as was believed, for some favourite food which she aroused; hence the birds, though fairly within shot, could not be fired at, lest the cow should be brought down by the same discharge!

The starling is to be met with very generally over the continent. Holland may, from the nature of the country, be called its head-quarters. Southwards, I have seen it in August at the Pontine marshes, between Rome and Naples; and eastwards, observed numbers in the middle of the month of May, about the ruined walls of Constantinople, near the celebrated Seven Towers. On comparing an example killed in Ireland, with one from India, labelled "Suharunpoor; January," they proved identical in species.

THE ROSE-COLOURED PASTOR.

Rose-coloured Starling, Ouzel, or Thrush.

Pastor roseus, Linn. (sp.)
Turdus „ „

Has at uncertain intervals, during summer and autumn, visited all quarters of the island, including the range of the most western counties.

In the course of three successive years, it has been met with. It has generally appeared singly, and during the cherry season, been taken alive in several instances. Mr. Vigors stated, in the Zoological Journal (No. 4, p. 489), that one of these birds had been shot near Wexford, in 1820. In the first volume of the Magazine of Natural History, p. 493, the following communication from Mr. C. Adams Drew, dated Ennis, June 25th, 1828, appeared:—"It is now above twenty years since, on visiting my friend Mr. Lane at Roxton, I found him in his garden endeavouring to shoot a strange bird, which had for several days previous been making sad havoc among his cherries. After two or three unsuccessful attempts on the part of Mr. Lane, the bird at last fell to my barrel. * * * Its cry resembled that of the water-ouzel. It was quite a *rara avis* in this country, no one knowing anything of it." A description of the bird follows, proving it to have been the *Pastor roseus.* Dr. R. Graves of Dublin writing to a mutual friend in Belfast, in Nov. 1830, mentioned, that among his late acquisitions had been the *P. roseus,* shot in a cherry orchard in the county of Clare (in the summer of 1830?) by one of his pupils, whose father shot a bird of the same species thirty years before, in the same orchard. A rose-coloured pastor "was captured at Carrigataha, adjoining Ballibrado, county of Tipperary, in June, 1833, by Mr. Wm. Fennell, who baited a fish-hook with a cherry, which the bird swallowed, and was thus taken. One was shot in a garden near Dublin on the 20th of July, 1833. On dissection, it proved to be a female; the eggs were small and not distinct; gizzard muscular; the skins of cherries visible, by which

fruit the inside of the gizzard and mouth were stained bright pink." * When in Dublin on the 26th of June, 1834, I saw an adult male *P. roseus* previous to its being skinned. It was taken in the garden of R. Long, Esq., Longfield, Cashel, in a cherry-net, on the 7th of that month, and had been kept alive for a fortnight. In July, 1836, Lieut. Davis, R.N., of Donaghadee, sent to the Belfast Museum an adult male, which was captured early in the month, in a garden near that town. About the middle of the month, a second example was shot at Hillsborough in the same county. On the 12th of August, the same year, a third was obtained in Ireland: it was shot near Kenmare, county of Kerry. In the month of August, 1837, a rose-coloured pastor was shot from among a flock of starlings on one of the islands of Arran, at the entrance of Galway bay. In June, 1838, one of these birds was obtained near Ashbourne, about ten miles from Dublin; its stomach was filled with cherries. On the 7th or 8th of July, that year, a *P. roseus* was shot, when feeding on the same fruit, at Newbarron, near Fieldstown, a few miles from Dublin. On the 13th of September, 1838, I saw two specimens which had been killed in different parts of the north of Ireland. A male bird was shot about the 1st of that month, in the plantations at Bangor Castle, county of Down, where another was seen in company with it; they had been observed there for some time. The other was shot by Alex. Tyler, Esq., at the Umbra, Magilligan, county of Londonderry, about the 10th of September. Having the opportunity of examining this bird in a fresh state, I drew up the following description:—

	inch.	line.
Entire length	8	9
Bill from rictus to point	1	$2\frac{1}{2}$
Upper mandible, measured along the ridge from forehead to point	0	9
Wing from carpus to end of longest quill	5	0
Tail extending beyond closed wings	1	0
Tarsus	1	3
Middle toe and nail	1	3
Hind toe and tail, measured in a straight line	0	9

* Rev. T. Knox.

Tibia feathered to the tarsal joint. Colours, those of the adult male, as described by authors (as are likewise those of the one above noticed, from Bangor Castle), and as such contradistinguished from the plumage assumed until the second year, according to Temminck's description (Man. part 3, p. 76). On dissection, it proved a male, and was in excellent condition. The stomach, with the exception of a large coleopterous insect, was entirely filled with the seeds of gooseberries.

In April, 1838, Mr. H. H. Dombrain of Dublin, received a rose-coloured pastor, which had been captured some years before at Woodhill, Ardara, county of Donegal: it was taken alive in the green-house in an exhausted state, and died a few hours afterwards.

With respect to the county of Kerry, Mr. R. Chute mentions one being shot when picking at fruit in the garden at Ballyheigh Castle; another being obtained at Watteville, and a third in July, 1841, when feeding on raspberries in the garden at Derraquin. A bird of this species, killed in the middle of August, 1845, in Roscommon (?), was sent to Dublin to be preserved. A pair was often seen, during the summer of 1846, in the garden at the Umbra, Magilligan, where they were remarked to be "very fond of fruit."

This species appears under the head of "Irregular birds of Passage," in a paper by M. Duval-Jouve on the Migratory Birds of Provence, published in the Zoologist, for Oct., 1845, p. 1115. It is remarked:—

"The rose-coloured pastor is sometimes seen in Provence. In the autumn of 1817, many were observed; in 1837, at the end of May and June, some were seen and always in flocks; they sought the large trees on the banks of the brooks, were fond of cherries, and might be easily approached."

On a comparison of Irish specimens, with some obtained at "Suharunpoor," India, the species proved to be the same.

THE CHOUGH.

Cornish Chough. Red-legged Jackdaw * or Crow.

Fregilus graculus, Linn. (sp.)
Corvus „ „

Inhabits precipitous rocks in various parts of Ireland.

It is noticed in Harris's Down (1744), and Smith's Cork (1749), as one of the birds of those counties, and in the latter is said to be "very common, frequenting rocks, old castles, and ruins upon the sea-coast." The species is more generally diffused around the rock-bound shores of Ireland, than British authors would lead us to believe it is on those of Scotland and England. It may be met with in such localities in the north, east, south, and west of the island.

The basaltic precipices of the north-east are admirably adapted to choughs, and about the promontory of Fairhead these birds particularly abound. On one occasion, when visiting this place and the head-lands in the immediate vicinity of the Giant's Causeway, on the same day (8th of June), during the breeding-season of these birds, I remarked choughs only about the former locality, and jackdaws only about the latter, both species being numerous in their respective quarters: the choughs, too, were wonderfully tame in this instance, permitting our approach within twenty-five paces.† About Horn-Head, in the north-west of the county of

* Red-legged jackdaw of the north of Ireland; cliff-daw of Kerry. Smith states in his History of Cork, that the Irish name for this bird implies a Spanish jackdaw.

† In Dr. J. D. Marshall's memoir, on the statistics and natural history of the basaltic island of Rathlin (lying off the north of the county of Antrim), it is remarked of the chough:—"This is called by the islanders, the *jackdaw*, and is by far the most numerous species on the island. In the month of July, I found them everywhere associated in large flocks, at one place frequenting inland situations, and at another congregated on the sea-shore. They had just collected together their different families, now fully fledged, and were picking up their food (which consisted chiefly of insects), either on the shore, in the crevices of rocks, or in the pasture fields. Mr. Selby mentions that the chough will not alight on the turf, if it can possibly avoid it, always preferring gravel, stones, or walls. In Rathlin, its choice of situation seems to be but sparingly exhibited, as I found it frequenting the corn and pasture fields, in even greater numbers than along the shores. * * * They breed on the lofty cliffs overhanging the sea; the eggs are of a whitish colour, speckled at the larger end

Donegal, I saw many choughs and jackdaws in the month of June, 1832, and was told by the gamekeeper of the district, that they never bred in company, or associated together there; the nest of the chough was stated by him to be placed so far within the clefts of rocks, as to be difficult of access. In August, 1845, Mr. Hyndman remarked that they were numerous about the rocks of Tory Island. The nearest place to Belfast tenanted at present, or within the last few years, by a pair or two of these birds, is a range of marine cliffs, called the Gobbins, just outside the northern entrance to the bay. Here on the 28th of May, some years ago, a nest of young birds, which made known their proximity to the summit of the rocks by their calls for food, was doomed to perish, by a visitor to the place wantonly shooting both their parents. In 1847, two pair bred there. When at Strangford Lough, in June, 1846, I was credibly assured that the chough breeds in Skatrick castle, and in an old castle on island Mahee. There are no cliffs in that quarter. One of these birds, shot on an island in Strangford Lough, in February, 1843, came under my notice. That choughs will sometimes wander far from their usual haunts, to a place in no respect suited to them, was evinced on the 5th of March, 1836, when a pair appeared at Dunbar's Dock, Belfast, and one of them, in beautiful adult plumage, was shot. That day and the preceding were very stormy: the wind southerly. The stomach of the specimen procured was filled with insect larvæ. In that from Strangford were the remains of such Crustacea, as are met with occasionally, "high and dry," upon marine rocks, as *Ligia oceanica* (small), *Aselli*, &c.; there was also some vegetable matter.

with brown. The chough is of a restless, active disposition, hopping or flying about from place to place; it is also very shy, and can with difficulty be approached. Temminck says, that the legs of this bird, before the moult, are of a dark colour; while Montagu affirms, that they are orange-coloured from the first. The young which I examined, were about six weeks old, and in them the bills were of a brownish orange; not of that brilliant colour which marks the adult bird, but certainly exhibiting enough of the orange to lead us to conjecture, that they would become completely of that colour after the moult. The legs could not be called 'orange-coloured,' for although there was a tinge of that colour, yet the brown predominated. I should, therefore, agree with Temminck, in stating the legs and feet to be 'dark-coloured' in the young birds."

When on a tour with Mr. R. Ball in the summer of 1834 to the west and south of Ireland, choughs were observed by us at Achil Head, and the largest of the South Islands of Arran, &c., in the west:* in the south, they were heard about the Lower Lake of Killarney, and seen at Cable Island, near Youghal. Other parts of the coast of Cork are frequented by them. About the cliffs at Ardmore, county of Waterford, they are said by Mr. R. Ball to be numerous, and to congregate in the evening like jackdaws before going to roost. Requiring two or three specimens for friends, he one evening in July or August offered a man a shilling each, for all that he would bring to him on the following morning, when, at an early hour, the man duly appeared with fourteen, and seriously apologised for the smallness of the number. Col. Sabine has remarked, that they breed in the rocks at Ballybunian, on the coast of Kerry; and the late Mr. T. F. Neligan of Tralee, in mentioning to me some years ago, that they were very common about the marine cliffs of that county, stated, that numbers built in the rocks of inland mountains, four or five miles distant from the sea. The choice of such places is not rare in Ireland. Some of the latest writers on British ornithology appear to think, that the chough never leaves the vicinity of the sea, and in one work, it is stated, that the species is "never observed inland," although Crow Castle has been noticed by Montagu as one of its haunts; this is situated in the beautiful vale of Llangollen in North Wales, where the Lombardy poplar, spiring above the other rich foliage around the picturesque village of the same name, imparts, in addition to other accompaniments, quite an Italian character to the scene. A pair of these birds were some years since observed throughout the breeding-season, about a ruin between Newtown-Crommelin and Cushendall, county of Antrim, three miles distant from the sea: at Salagh Braes, a semicircular range of basaltic rocks in the same county, and nearly twice that distance from the coast, the chough builds. The gamekeeper at Tollymore Park, county of Down, informed me in 1836, that he

* "Cornish choughs with red bills and legs," are noticed in O'Flaherty's 'H-Iar Connaught," written in 1684, as frequenting Arranmore, &c., p. 67.

had shot these birds in the mountains of Mourne, which are regularly frequented by them:—they build in the inland cliffs. For some years previously, he had annually taken the young from two or three nests, with the intention of rearing them, but was unsuccessful.

This intelligent gamekeeper assured me, that once among these mountains, he came upon seven choughs attendant on a poor sheep, which was in a particularly weak state when lambing. About half of the young animal was protruded, and had been consumed by these birds, three of which were at the time busily engaged preying upon it.* He had not a gun with him, but was so wroth at witnessing this act of the chough, that when armed, in the latter part of the day, he sacrificed three of these birds; all which came within his range. He believes that choughs would even destroy a weak animal. They are seen by him, commonly frequenting the entrances to foxes' earths, for the purpose, he believes, of feeding on "sheep-shanks" and other similar rejectamenta. As the chough is not considered a carnivorous bird, I was particular in questioning my informant as to the species, and his accuracy is unquestionable. Montagu mentions that his tame bird was fed partly on raw and boiled flesh-meat. Their liveliness, in addition to their beauty, renders them attractive in captivity. In the Zoological Garden, Regent's Park, they may generally be seen, most industriously occupied, digging with their bills into the chinks of the wall, or floor of their inclosure.

Mr. R. Davis, jun., of Clonmel, informs me, that the chough has been shot within a mile of that town. He has seen the species at Helvick Head, county of Waterford, and in great numbers at Loop Head, on the coast of Clare;—about the marine cliffs generally of the latter county, it is common. Mr. Davis writes:—"Although Mr. Selby says 'it has been remarked that the chough will not alight on the turf if it can possibly avoid it, always preferring gravel, stones, or walls,' I have seen hundreds freely alight

* Mr. Hogg contributes to Macgillivray's British Birds, (vol. i.) a similar account of the carrion-crow, with horrible details of what, to human sympathy, would seem its cold-blooded cruelty to sheep, when in the act of parturition.

and feed on it, and have observed them feeding like rooks in a ploughed field." I have myself observed these birds on the short pasture of the marine cliffs. It is further stated by my correspondent, that "great numbers of choughs breed in the precipices over the lake in the Commeragh mountains, county of Waterford, about seven Irish miles from the sea, where they are very rarely molested, on account of building in almost inaccessible spots. Here the young were ready to fly on the 6th and 7th of August, 1836: on the 28th of April, 1841, four of their eggs were procured from this locality." At the Saltee Islands, off the Wexford coast, and about Howth, near Dublin, they are often met with.*

I have seen examples of the chough, which were killed at Portpatrick, Wigtonshire, and along the Ayrshire coast; and have heard the cry of the species, in the evening, about the ruined castle at Ballantrae, in the latter county. In July, 1826, when in the valley of glaciers, on the south side of Mont Blanc, I was attracted by the well-known, though somewhat distant call of the chough, and on looking up, saw an immense flock wending its way towards the pinnacles or *aiguilles* of that "monarch of mountains."

The call of the closely allied *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, Temm., likewise an inhabitant of the Alps, is unknown to me, but in the present instance, my attention was arrested by the similarity of the note to that of our native bird. This, to my ear, is very lively and pleasing, and cannot be mistaken for that of the jackdaw. The flight of the chough too is peculiar, though as in others of the *Corvidæ*, the quills are much expanded, and give a deeply fringed appearance to the wing, as the bird flies overhead. A friend remarks upon the flight as "singularly waving; they flap their wings, then sail forty or fifty yards, and so on gradually, until they alight."

Borlase, in his Natural History of Cornwall (p. 243, &c.), published in 1758, gives, in a quaint and attractive manner, a full and interesting account of this bird, which has often the prefix of *Cornish* to its name.

* Major T. Walker.

THE RAVEN.

Corvus Corax, Linn.

Is distributed over the island, and more especially to be seen within a day's foray of the rocks in which it roosts or builds.

As sites for the raven's nest, rocks are here preferred to trees, and wherever there is a range of cliffs suited to the purpose, this bird is sure to be found, unless the eagle or buzzard monopolize the locality, a remark which applies to the islets off the coast—as the Copeland, Rathlin, Tory, &c.,—as well as to the mainland. In the range of lofty precipitous cliffs, called the Gobbins, rising directly above the sea, a pair of ravens build. Their nest here, in 1847, was robbed of its eggs; a new nest was then constructed, and the eggs, six in number each time, met with a similar fate. From time immemorial ravens have been considered to inhabit the same rock. In the lower districts of England, certain trees have for such a length of time been resorted to by this species for nesting, as to have acquired the name of Raven-trees. In like manner, a wild and unfrequented locality in the Belfast mountains, is believed to bear the name of the Crow Glen, from a pair of ravens having for a series of years built in a cliff there. Persecution has long since driven them from the spot, but the name is still retained. Their place was for some years supplied by a pair of kestrels (*Falco Tinnunculus*), but as their nest could, though with some difficulty, be reached, it was always robbed of its young tenants, and this species, too, has ceased to nidify there.

Ravens are generally so very wary and distrustful of man, that the following note, communicated to me, may be worth insertion. "In the middle of March, 1828, a pair of ravens had a nest in Grogan's glen, in the Black mountain, Belfast. It was near the top of the highest rock, was formed of sticks and lined with wool, and contained seven eggs of a dark green colour, blotched over with black. The birds were very tame, approaching within three or four yards, and so long as I remained, hopping about near me,

when their glossy plumage looked very beautiful." Their tameness, I have no doubt, arose simply from their being unmolested, perhaps in consequence of a belief among the country people, that it is "unlucky" to kill a raven; for this very pair of birds was known to carry off eggs, young ducks, &c., from the nearest farmyards. But, as is usual in such cases, one of the poor ravens, thus putting its trust in man, was shot a few days afterwards by a vagrant gunner.

I have with much interest observed in the month of October, about the fine basaltic cliffs of the Cave-hill, near Belfast, and long after the breeding-season was past, that as evening set in, a few ravens would appear together, hoarsely croaking about the rocks, while at the same time hosts of jackdaws garrulously chattered, and several kestrels, as they careered gracefully about in company, added their shrill voices. After some little time they all retired to the rocks for the night. I have here remarked solitary ravens utter notes in sound likes *whe-ee-upp*, the last syllable being most guttural.

On one occasion I had interesting evidence of the power of sight in the raven. A nest of young rats, not more than three or four days old, had been dug up in a stubble field, and after being killed, were left there. Very soon afterwards, two or three ravens passed over the place at a great height, and on coming above the spot, dropped almost directly down upon them. The young rats had not been ten minutes dead at the time, and consequently could hardly have emitted any effluvium. Besides, they were so small, that even had they given out any to the air, it seems hardly possible that the odour could have ascended to the great elevation at which the birds had been. Sight alone, I conceive, must in this instance have been the guiding sense.

Mr. R. Davis, junr., of Clonmel, remarks, that ravens, if taken young, can be reared so as not to injure other birds, as he "for a long time kept in one cage a raven, a hooded crow, a jackdaw, a magpie, and a jay, all of which lived on good terms with each other." Mr. R. Ball communicates the following anecdote of this species.—"When a boy at school, a tame raven was very

attentive in watching our cribs or bird-traps, and when a bird was taken, he endeavoured to catch it by turning up the crib, but in so doing, the bird always escaped, as the raven could not let go the crib in time to seize it. After several vain attempts of this kind, the raven, seeing another bird caught, instead of going at once to the crib, went to another tame raven, and induced it to accompany him, when the one lifted up the crib, and the other bore the poor captive off in triumph."

It was a common practice in a spacious yard in Belfast, to lay trains of corn for sparrows, and to shoot them from a window, which was only so far open as to afford room for the muzzle of the gun; neither the instrument of destruction, nor the shooter being visible from the outside. A tame raven, which was a nestling when brought to the yard, and probably had never seen a shot fired, afforded evidence that it understood the whole affair. When any one appeared carrying a gun across the yard towards the house from which the sparrows were fired at, the raven exhibited the utmost alarm, by hurrying off with all possible speed, but in a ludicrously awkward gait, to hide itself, screaming loudly all the while. Though alarmed for its own safety, this bird always concealed itself near to, and within view of the field of action; the shot was hardly fired, when it dashed out from its retreat, and seizing one of the dead or wounded sparrows, hurried back to its hiding-place. I have repeatedly witnessed the whole scene. The raven's portion of the sparrows was as duly exacted, as the tithe of the quails killed during their migration at Capri, in the bay of Naples, is said to be by the bishop of that island.

Mr. R. Patterson, in a note kindly contributed, remarks :—"In September, 1831, I travelled from Portarlington, as far as Newbridge barracks, with a very intelligent man, the colonel of a Lancer regiment stationed there. This gentleman mentioned, that when near Limerick on the preceding day, he saw from the coach-top a raven alight among a flock of full-grown ducks in a field adjoining the road, and after giving one of them a few blows, throw it on its back, and begin to tear it up. I did not before know that it ever carried its audacity so far as to attack a duck

when full-grown, as in this instance." Mr. Waterton states, that a tame raven kept at Walton Hall, "took a sudden dislike to an old duck, with which, till then, he had been on the best of terms; and he killed her in an instant." A raven which lived in the yard attached to the chief inn at Antrim, for about fifteen years, had occasional encounters with game-cocks brought thither to engage it, and bets pended on the issue. The raven in every instance proved the victor. Avoiding the blows of the cock, the former acted only on the defensive, until it could manage to lay hold of his head, which instantly was crushed in his powerful beak, and its antagonist fell lifeless on the ground.

Mr. Robert Warren, junr., informs me, that when on the 27th of April, 1848, at the Reanies,—lofty rocks, six miles southward of the entrance to Cork harbour—where the common cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) breeds; he observed a pair of ravens visiting the nests for the purpose of carrying away the eggs: and saw not less than five borne off on the points of their bills. Their depredations were committed with impunity, as they only visited the nests during the absence of the owners. As these ravens had a nest about three hundred yards from the breeding haunt of the cormorant, the number of eggs they will thus abstract in a season, must be very great.

The late Mr. T. F. Neligan of Tralee mentioned to me, that ravens chiefly frequent the sea-shore in the county of Kerry, where he had often seen them feeding on putrid fish.* Great numbers of these birds are in some works, (especially those treating of American ornithology,) described as flying in company. Although ravens may be seen every day in the year around Belfast, and usually in pairs, the most I have heard of being observed on wing together, did not exceed twelve in number. About Navarino and Athens, the raven has come under my notice—

* Along the coast of Norway, ravens were remarked by my friend, the late George Matthews, Esq., of Springvale, to be "in great numbers everywhere, and very tame. They perform the office of scavengers about the houses of the people, a very necessary and useful occupation, considering the quantities of fish offal thrown out" Grey crows (*C. cornix*) were also very numerous.

Chateaubriand introduces it at the latter place, in his description of sunrise, as seen from the Acropolis.*

Mr. Waterton, in his Essays on Natural History, gives a highly interesting account of the raven, but, to his great grief, this bird has not for many years been seen about Walton Hall. Sir Wm. Jardine, with an accurately observant eye, points out (in his British Birds) the favourite haunts of the raven. Mr. Macgillivray treats very fully of its habits, and gives much desirable information (vol. i.); as Audubon likewise does, from personal observation in America. The raven is honoured with a place in those delightful articles of Blackwood's Magazine for 1826, entitled 'A Glance over Selby's Ornithology,' in which the keen observer of the habits of birds is evident, through the wit and imagination investing the whole matter.

THE CARRION CROW.

Corvus corone, Linn.

Though inhabiting this island, is much less common than in England.

It is not equally diffused over Great Britain, being, as we are informed, "very uncommon in the northern and middle parts of Scotland, but in the southern division of that country and in England, much more numerous than the raven or the hooded crow."† When on a visit at Jardine Hall, Dumfries-shire, in October, 1845, I particularly remarked, that the carrion crow took the place which the hooded or grey crow occupies in the north of Ireland:—at Rammerscales, in the same neighbourhood, not less than a dozen were seen congregated one evening at roosting time.

For its comparative rarity in Ireland, I cannot account. The want of old trees at the present time might be imagined one reason, but their scarcity cannot be the cause, as it appears from the following extract, that at a period when there was much old wood in the country, the bird was believed not to be found here.

* Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem. † Macgillivray, vol. i. p. 519.

In the 1st volume of Tracts printed for the Irish Archæological Society, it is remarked, in 'A Brife description of Ireland, made in this yeere 1589, by Robert Payne,' that,—"There is not that place in Ireland where anye venomous thinge will liue. There is neither mol, pye, nor carren crow." In a note to this, Dr. Aquilla Smith of Dublin, who edited the memoir, observed:—"Of the *carren* or carrion crow (*Corvus corone*), we have not any authority as to the date of its introduction into Ireland. Moryson [in 1617] says, we have not the blacke crow, but onely crowes of mingled colour, such as wee call Royston crows," part iii. b. 3. p. 160. Although the attractive magpie may have been introduced to this country, I cannot think that the carrion crow ever was, but believe it to be strictly indigenous. Its comparative scarcity in this island, and not being commonly distinguished from its equally sable congener the rook, may account for its having been overlooked.

This species was included by Smith, as one of the birds of the county of Cork; but that it was not well known in Ireland, is sufficiently indicated by the absence of its name from Mr. Templeton's published catalogue of the native vertebrate animals. That eminent naturalist has remarked in his MS.—"I have not seen this bird, but from what I have heard, am inclined to think it is found about Dundalk." About the river Lagan, within the flow of the tide, and along the shores of Belfast bay, this crow is sometimes met with, and feeds upon any animal matter cast up by the waves, but more especially on the carcasses of horses, which after being skinned, are left upon the beach. The refuse of the slaughter-house, when spread on meadows for manure, particularly attracts it inland.

The carrion crow is known to me, as found in the north, east, and west of the island: in the south, as already mentioned, it is noticed by Smith, but was never seen by Mr. R. Ball during his residence at Youghal; nor by the Rev. Joseph Stopford, who has given much attention to the birds of the county of Cork. The species is well known to this gentleman, from his having often shot it in England. About Clonmel, however, Mr. R. Davis, junr.,

states, that it is always to be found, though not very common. In the neighbouring county of Kilkenny, the attention of a gentleman of my acquaintance was one day attracted by a "black crow" having an extraordinary white appearance about the head. It flew about a hundred yards after being first seen, and then alighted on the ground. On running up to ascertain the cause of the phenomenon, he was astonished to see the identical bird fly off, an ordinary crow; but on reaching the place where it had "pitched," a duck's egg was found, which, being carried in the bill, had produced the appearance described;—the egg was still whole.*

When at Glenarm Park, county of Antrim, in 1833, the gamekeeper, a native of England, who knew the bird well there, stated, that he had seen a few about Glenarm, where, in the breeding-season, one of them and a grey crow (*C. cornix*) were constantly associated together for some weeks, and, he had no doubt, were paired. A Scotch gamekeeper, who soon afterwards supplied the place of my informant, told me in the following year, that he had occasionally killed the carrion crow in Glenarm Park, but considered the species rather rare.† He assured me, that when gamekeeper in Scotland, he had repeatedly seen the carrion and grey crow paired, and had known an instance of such a pair being mated for two or three years, and building in the same tree annually. The identity of the grey one was sufficiently manifest by its being minus a foot, which its owner had not improbably been deprived of by some trap. In the instances which came under the observation of my trustworthy informant, the grey crow was considered to be the male, on account of its comparative absence from the nest, &c. The young birds, in one nest examined by this gamekeeper, were stated to have exhibited, some the plumage of the grey, and others that of the carrion crow.

* In Macgillivray's British Birds (vol. i. p. 523), an instance of the carrion crow bearing off the egg of a wild duck whole, is recorded by Mr. Weir, who witnessed it:—this gentleman and Mr. Hogg communicate full and interesting narrations of the bird to that work. The contributions of the latter, called a "Shepherd" in the preface have all the racy spirit of the mountain air about them, Mr. Waterton states, that the carrion crow carries eggs off, "not in his bill but on the point of it, having thrust his upper mandible through the shell."

† I saw specimens which had been obtained there, exhibited as "vermin."

This species is sometimes, if not generally, infested with parasitic insects (lice) to an extraordinary degree, so much so as in one instance to deter a friend from skinning one he had received, just after it was shot. On mentioning this to another amateur taxidermist, he remarked, that in skinning one of these birds, he became "covered" with its parasites. According to my own observation, birds of prey, or species partly carnivorous, are more infested with lice than others; and particularly with those belonging to the most active and stirring genera of their attractive tribe! In Mr. Denny's Monographia Anoplurorum Britanniæ, much information will be found on this subject.

THE GREY CROW.*

Hooded Crow.

Corvus cornix, Linn.

Is common in Ireland, and resident in all quarters of the island.

In the north and east, it has come under my own observation at every period of the year, and is fully as numerous in summer as at any other time. At this season, too, I have remarked the bird as common in the west and south; and my correspondents there agree in noticing it as a resident species. Sir. Wm. Jardine observes:—"So far as our information and observation have extended, this species is stationary through the year in the northern parts of Scotland, while in the south, and in some parts of England, it is migratory." † The Rev. L. Jenyns, in a note to p. 143, of his edition of White's Selborne (1843), remarks, that this bird "has very rarely been known to breed in England," and

* In the north of Ireland, it is commonly called by this, its most distinctive appellation: in some parts of the south, *Scald Crow* is the name in frequent use. In a foot-note to the starling, I have noticed the grey crow as called *huddy* in Perthshire, where I had been shooting. *Hoddy*, is applied by Mr. Macgillivray to the carrion crow (vol. i. p. 516, and vol. iii. p. 715), and given in the former volume as one of many of its names; in the latter, the species is called simply "hoddy or carrion crow."

† Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 233.

adds:—"There is a record, however, of its having done so near Scarborough, on two or three occasions."

From what has been written on the grey crow, as a bird of Great Britain, it would appear to be more common in Ireland generally, than in England, or on the mainland of Scotland.* Mr. Macgillivray remarks, that it "is very abundant in the Hebrides, the Shetland, and Orkney islands," vol. i. p. 531. I have observed the species to be so, on the islands off the coast of Ireland; where rocks are necessarily its breeding places. Many build in the precipitous marine cliffs of the Gobbins, outside the northern entrance to Belfast bay, as numbers of jackdaws also do; together with the raven and the chough. These cliffs are the haunt of innumerable sea-fowl. The sea-shore or its vicinity is the favourite resort of this bird—which may occasionally be seen mingled with *Grallatores* and gulls, at the edge of the in-coming waves at Belfast bay†—but it is likewise resident in far inland localities. Sir Wm. Jardine states, that according to his observation, rocks are preferred as a nesting-place. Mr. Macgillivray (vol. i. p. 533) seems to doubt its building at all in trees; but around Belfast, trees in the immediate vicinity of its "beat" are preferred to rocks a little more distant, where the raven and jackdaw find a home. In some very tall and fine beech trees, on a lawn bordering the bay, several pairs of these birds have built for many years, and two or three of their nests occasionally appearing in a single tree, suggest the idea of an infant rookery. When, however, more nests than

* With respect to Swansea in Wales, we learn the following from Mr. Dillwyn's Fauna and Flora of that locality:—"Hooded crow never common in this neighbourhood; about forty years ago I watched a pair, which throughout the winter were always to be seen on the sea-shore. * * * They disappeared in the spring." p. 6. (1848.)

† Mr. Poole remarks:—"On the 10th of August, I saw these birds flocking along the course of the Elbe, between Hamburgh and Magdeburgh. Large numbers were distributed along the shores in company with gulls, whose habits they seemed to imitate, for they frequently dipped down to the water while on wing, and stretched out their feet to support themselves, while they picked up whatever morsel had attracted their attention. In the mountains of Silesia they endure the utmost severity of the winter to gain a scanty livelihood in the vicinity of towns, into the centre of which they sometimes venture, or on hills which face the south, and from whose declivity the snow has consequently been partially dissolved before the weak and glittering rays of the sun. They flock together in considerable numbers, perhaps as many as 100 or 150 in a troop."

one appear in any tree, they are I believe the erections of different years, or are not tenanted at the same time. In wooded glens and other localities, where the *Coniferæ* bore a very small proportion to the deciduous trees, I have remarked the partiality of this bird for building in the pine. Mr. W. M'Calla, of Roundstone, states, that "the grey crow is very common in Connemara, and breeds in all the wooded islands of the lakes, in other woods and thickets, and even in thorn-bushes in the vicinity of houses: it lays from three to five eggs.* These birds are not accused of doing much harm to the keepers of poultry, the dead animal matter, at all seasons on the shore, supplying abundance of food." He further remarks, "that in the upper part of Roundstone bay, they may be observed picking up the *Buccinum boreale*, rising with them into the air, and then letting them fall on the rocks to break them: in which they are frequently unable to succeed, and have to drop the shell from a height in the air several times, before attaining their object." Mr. R. Ball has seen one of these birds drop a cockle (*Cardium edule*) on a stone to break it, while another stood cunningly by to snatch up the prey, and succeeded in the theft. All this is but a counterpart of what is related by Dr. Fleming in his Philosophy of Zoology, as having been observed by him in Zetland. I have myself repeatedly witnessed† the mere act of its rising into the air with shell-fish and letting them drop on rocks. This bird is useful on the sea-shore by consuming any animal matter cast by the tide upon the beach; but is looked upon by the gamekeeper as an evil-doer, is accused of sucking the eggs of game, and of occasionally destroying the infant brood. Accordingly it is persecuted. A pair of grey crows was believed to have sucked a dozen or more eggs in a wild-duck's nest in the aquatic

* Six nests were built last season in trees, four of which were pines, in a demesne of about sixty acres, near Cork. They were ascended to early in April, for the sake of the eggs, three to five in number. The nests were composed of sticks, and lined with wool and hair. (Mr. R. Warren, junr.)

† In Leigh's Natural History of Lancashire, &c., it is remarked of the "*sea crow* (*C. cornix*). Its food for the most part is *muscles*, and I have often with admiration observed these birds to pick up pebble-stones, and then to soar with them in the air to a considerable height, then to let fall the stones among the beds of shell-fishes, which most commonly break some of them: they afterwards alight and feed upon their prey," p. 158.

menagerie at the Falls, where a novel experiment to get rid of them was resorted to. Four young birds in a nest were pinioned, in expectation that their parents would continue feeding them, until affording an opportunity for their being shot or trapped. Disappointment was however the result, as the old birds, on returning to the nest, and perceiving the mutilated state of their progeny, left them to perish.

Two grey crows were once observed in pursuit of a full-grown rabbit, in a large field, at Springvale (Down). The chase was continued only whilst the rabbit ran:—when squatted, they never attempted to molest it. The chase was continued for some time. According to the testimony of several of the wild-fowl shooters of Belfast bay, grey crows are not uncommonly seen in pursuit of the smaller shore-birds (*Grallatores*); and two of my informants were witness to a couple of these crows pursuing a merlin (*Falco Æsalon*), which had captured a sandlark (*Tringa variabilis*) until the prey was dropped by the hawk, when it was picked up, and borne off by one of them from the surface of the water. When these shooters kill great numbers of sandlarks at a shot, with their punt or swivel-guns, the grey crows, which are always on the beach, are sure to carry off several of the wounded in their bills, before the men can reach the spot. The cries of the poor sandlarks when thus seized, are described even by the fowlers to be most piteous; greatly more so, than when they lay hold of them. A pet buzzard (*Buteo vulgaris*), kept at Fort William, was, when flying about the demesne, always persecuted by grey crows.

One of these birds was shot by a friend at Springvale, when it had young, and on the evening of the same day, he saw about ten grey crows come to feed the nestlings: they however died in the course of the night, which was very cold and wet. When engaged in the construction of their nest, they are more heedless of enemies than at other times, and then occasionally fall victims to the gun: but if one should be killed, the survivor is soon provided with another mate. At this early stage of the breeding-season, as remarked at "the Falls," near Belfast, neither these birds nor magpies, were mated again for three or four days. A

new nest was then commenced, contiguous to, but not at the same place as the former one. The twice-married crows and magpies here, always proved too wary to be shot.

Mr. Yarrell observes, that "more than two are seldom seen associated together, except when food is to be obtained." But at all seasons of the year, I have seen them, occasionally to the number of fifteen, associating together in little troops on the shore of Belfast bay, when there was no apparent cause for their meeting; and when there has been such in the inland neighbourhood, so many as seventeen have been reckoned on a single tree. In a rabbit warren, at the wild peninsula of the Horn, in the north-west of the county of Donegal, I once, on the 27th of June, saw forty of these birds in a dense flock. They cannot, like jackdaws, be considered as native inhabitants of large towns, but on the 3rd of April, and several previous mornings, some years ago, seven or eight of them frequented an old garden in the town of Belfast: one or two were occasionally to be seen perched on the back of a cow kept there. A gentleman living at Springvale, had a pet grey crow which followed him about the place, and when not so engaged, went sometimes to feed with its brethren on the shore. When whistled for, it hurried back to its master.

In the middle of May, I met with this species about the Valley of Sweet Waters, near Constantinople, and, at the beginning of June, in the islands of Delos and Paros.

THE ROOK.

Corvus frugilegus, Linn.

Is as common throughout the cultivated and wooded parts of Ireland, as in any other country.

This bird is generally looked upon by the farmer as an arch enemy, of whose deeds he has ocular demonstration,—the evil that it does being apparent in the headless stalks of grain, while its virtues do not in a direct manner come under his cognizance. The rook has always seemed to me a bird intended by its Creator to check the undue increase of insects most injurious to the vege-

tation of the field, and keep them within due bounds. Both England and the continent furnish instances of the almost total destruction of crops in particular districts, consequent on its extirpation.

The good done by this bird is generally admitted by the authors who have written within the last sixty years, greatly to exceed the evil it commits. Sir Wm. Jardine speaks of the good, as "at least compensating for their destruction or injury to the produce of the fields." It may be possible, that in particular localities the "Dr." and "Cr." account will about balance. A gentleman whose extensive farm is situated in the valley of the Lagan, and little more than a mile distant from three extensive rookeries, (his place forming, as it were, the centre of the circle,) once remarked to me, he would rather than ten pounds a year, that rooks never alighted on his fields. His charges against them comprise about the sum total of the evil propensities of the species: that, "when the blade of wheat just shows itself above the ground, or the pickle of grain is by frost, or otherwise, rendered accessible, these birds pick it off at daybreak; when grain is lodged, they utterly destroy it, and when in stooks, do serious damage, not only by eating the pickles, but by carrying away heads of the grain, which are found scattered about the adjacent fields. They injure the potato crop, by picking up the planted 'sets' in spring, and in autumn, the young potatoes. This is only done where the crop is thin and poor, as from such bare spots, they can have a look-out against approaching enemies; where the foliage is luxuriant, they never alight. They sometimes, too, attack the cherries in the garden." * The only good attributed to them is their "picking the grubs off lay ground, when broken up and harrowed." That where very numerous, they do much of the harm here alleged, is undoubted; but to prove they do much more good than is imagined, I requested to be allowed

* Mr. Jesse, who in his Gleanings of Natural History treats most agreeably of rooks generally, (and particularly of the *Royal* rookeries,) remarks, that these birds are "sad depredators on my cherry-trees, attacking them early in the morning and carrying off great quantities." He is nevertheless satisfied, that the good done by the species greatly counterbalances the evil.

the examination of any slaughtered birds, that by exhibiting the food they contained, my friend might be convinced of the evil of his ways in destroying them; but as usual in such cases, none were ever sent to me. The propriety of having boys to guard the lately-sown wheat, where the depredations are perhaps the most serious, was suggested, but the very early hour was said to be an insuperable obstacle. The rooks could, however, at trifling expense, be watched, and frightened away by boys at this time, and when the grain is lodged.* Such precaution taken, very little harm indeed could these birds justly be accused of doing.

One of the inimitable tail-pieces to Bewick's Birds (ed. 1832, vol. i. p. 93), points to the inutility of one kind of scare-crow, where a rook is represented peering curiously, but without the least fear, at the wretched effigy of humanity, erected to frighten away the species. In newly planted potato-fields, &c., I have remarked hosts of these birds feeding, while among them hung their gibbeted brethren, only lately killed.† At the more genial period of the year, flocks of rooks occasionally visit the mountain pastures near Belfast.

Wm. Sinclaire, Esq., of Milltown, Belfast, has informed me, that towards the end of autumn, for a dozen years or more successively, after the harvest was gathered in, numbers of rooks came every morning for about a fortnight, to the pine-trees (*Pinus sylvestris*) in that district, for the sake of the cones, which they plucked from the branches and carried away.‡ When the cones could not be detached in the ordinary manner, they seized them in their bills, and launched into the air, that the weight of their

* The Bishop of Norwich, in his Familiar History of Birds, fairly weighs the good and harm done by rooks, and is convinced that the former greatly preponderates. He suggests this watching, as Sir Wm. Jardine, likewise, has subsequently done; and I have been pleased to see it carried into effect on the farm attached to Belvoir Park, near Belfast, where boys provided with a watchman's rattle, or similar instrument, were employed in frightening the rooks from newly sown fields.

† A friend who kept three eagles, procured rooks enough to feed them on in summer, as these birds came to regale themselves at the troughs containing pig's-meat, of which potatoes formed the principal part.

‡ Mr. Poole, too, remarks, that in the county of Wexford, "the cones of Scotch firs form a considerable part of the subsistence of rooks in the autumn. They generally carry them to some distance from the trees and dissect them on the ground."

bodies might separate them from the branches. Such was their common procedure with unyielding cones, as witnessed with much interest from the windows of my friend's house; some pines, in which this ingenious feat was regularly practised, being only a few yards distant. The rook being an especial favourite with me on account of the benefit it does mankind, I was much gratified to learn this proof of its intelligence. This feat raises the species to an equality with the grey crow, as evinced by this bird's rising into the air with shell-fish, and dropping them on the rocks to break them, and renders the rook not unworthy, on the score of intellect, of being placed in the same family group with the raven. What they do with the cones, has not been ascertained. It would seem to me, that unless the scales be so widely open, that the seed is ready to drop out, they could hardly reach it, and even then, a portion only would be accessible; the scales themselves could only, I conceive, be detached, when partially decomposed; unfortunately, the proceedings of the birds, subsequent to their carrying off the cones, have not been watched.*

Great meetings of rooks, before the breeding-season commences, have been alluded to by authors, some of whom consider that the object is to settle preliminaries respecting that important period —the correctness of which idea seems probable, though it must be stated, that in the middle of October, I have remarked similar assemblages. These meetings are sometimes long continued. During four weeks in the year 1837—from January 21st to February 17th—whenever I happened to ride between two and three o'clock, in the direction of two rookeries, I always saw, at a place intermediate between them, and about a mile distant from each, extraordinary numbers, amounting certainly to several thousands; more than I conceive the two rookeries could furnish—a third

* Mr. Blackwall, in his Researches in Zoology (p. 156), remarks, that "rooks in the autumn frequently bury acorns in the earth, probably with the intention of having recourse to them when their wants are more urgent." Mr. Jesse, too, states that these birds "are known to bury acorns, and, I believe, walnuts also, as I have observed them taking ripe walnuts from a tree, and returning to it before they could have had time to break them and eat the contents. Indeed, when we consider how hard the shell of a walnut is, it is not easy to guess how the rook contrives to break them. May they not, by first burying them, soften the shells, and afterwards return to feed upon them?" (Gleanings in Natural History, 1st series.)

rookery about a mile and a half distant must, I imagine, have likewise contributed its numbers. Although they closely covered fields of all kinds (pasture, meadow-land, and ploughed ground), they were not congregated for the purpose of feeding, not more perhaps than one in a hundred being ever so engaged. Again, they would all be on wing at such a height as to look no larger than swallows, and would keep within as limited a space in the air, as they had occupied on the earth.

Rooks, as remarked by Mr. Macgillivray, "seem to calculate upon the protection which they usually receive in the neighbourhood of their breeding-places." Here, it is highly interesting to observe them become fellow-labourers with man when the plough is at work, alighting at the ploughman's heels, and closely following its track to consume the destructive larvæ which are turned up; thus performing an important office that the lords of creation could not accomplish for themselves. At such times, too, as if conscious of the good in which they are engaged, they admit of a near approach, and their finely polished plumage has a beautiful effect, as it glances like burnished metal in the sun. Their time of roosting varies a little, as the afternoon may be bright or gloomy. Once on the 10th of August, I remarked a great number busily employed in feeding at some distance from the rookery so late as seven o'clock in the evening; the day throughout having been dull and dark.

Rooks sometimes do a great deal of injury to trees in or near rookeries, by perching on their topmost branches. At Cultra, county of Down, the upper portions of the branches of very large sycamore and beech trees, have been wholly killed by them. At Jardine Hall, they have proved very injurious to young trees, especially larches of about fifteen years' growth, by building in them, and destroying their leading shoots. I saw many instances of this having been done, although old trees are in abundance, not only in the demesne, but adjacent to the young ones selected. The ring-dove, too, has greatly injured some beautiful and thriving young Weymouth pines there by roosting on their top shoots.

The rook, like other birds mentioned in these pages, can be

justly accused of having had valuable stolen property in its possession: some lace of a fine and costly kind, spread out to dry, at Nelson Hill, Youghal, was lost to the owner for some time, but eventually discovered in the nests of a rookery in the adjoining demesne. That the rook will sometimes carry building materials a considerable way, I once had evidence by observing one bearing a quantity of hay to its nest, a mile distant, and how much farther off it was picked up, was unknown.

I was informed by Richard Langtry, Esq., in the spring of 1831, that a pair of herons having built in the rookery at Dromedaragh, county of Antrim, the rooks tore the first nest to pieces, but the herons eventually succeeded, and reared their brood in safety. A few years before that time, about one hundred and fifty young rooks had been killed there during a storm, by being blown out of the nests. Among adult birds, there was an extraordinary fatality in the county of Westmeath on the night of the great hurricane of January 7th, 1839. As noticed by me, in a communication to the Annals of Natural History,* Mr. Ball was assured by Dean Vignolles, on whose property the circumstance occurred, that the amazing number of 33,000 † were picked up dead on the shores of a lake some miles in length, and with extensive rookeries on its borders. So remarkably numerous were

* Note on the Effects of the Hurricane of January 7, 1839, in Ireland, on some Birds, Fishes, &c., vol. iii. p. 182.

† Were a figure taken off the above number, it would be reduced to what I have remarked to constitute a respectable rookery. Mr. Jesse, too, states that "the average number of rooks' nests, during the last four years, in the avenue of Hampton Court Part, has been about 750; allowing three young birds and a pair of old ones to each nest, the number would amount to 3750."—Gleanings, p. 65, 1st edit.

A few years ago, these birds were considered too abundant at Purdysburn, near Belfast, and a thinning of their numbers was commenced when the young were "branchers," —a very fatal time. During three weeks, about twenty dozen a day were sacrificed, —a number, which in eighteen days would amount to 4,320, and yet they were only thinned. Sir Wm. Jardine is of opinion, that the rookery at Jardine Hall, which cannot be called a very large one, contains not less than 12,000 birds. A few years ago, when he wished to diminish them—as they are considered injurious when very numerous, though useful when kept within due bounds—3,000, were killed.

As that gentleman has remarked to me, he can well imagine vast numbers of rooks being killed, by being blown against the trees, and into the lake, during such a tremendous hurricane as the one alluded to. He was once witness to a covey of about a dozen partridges, flying very rapidly down the river at Dryburgh, during a high wind, when six of them were blown against the chains of the suspension bridge, and fell dead beneath.

the dead bodies, that as a matter of curiosity they were reckoned by some boys, as they gathered them into heaps. Dean Vignolles likewise submitted to Mr. Ball's inspection an unusually thick panel of a new window shutter, which was driven in and split, by a rook being dashed against it, on the night in question :— the innocent cause of the damage was found dead between the window and the shutter, inside the room. Other fatalities occasionally befall the rook. In the autumn of 1831 (?), there was a dense fog over Lough Neagh and its neighbourhood, for two nights and an entire day, during which time great numbers of these birds perished in its waters, and were afterwards washed ashore. I have been told that a similar circumstance occurred in the harbour of Cove, in the south of Ireland, some years ago. At mid-winter, I have remarked large bodies returning at roosting time, across the broadest portion of Belfast bay, to their rookery.

At Redhall, county of Antrim, a friend once saw a brood of four young rooks, all of which were white, though both parents were of the ordinary sable hue. J. V. Stewart, Esq., of Rockhill, near Letterkenny, possesses two varieties of the rook, one entirely of a dingy brown colour, and having a diseased appearance: the other, with two white bars across the wings, the rest of the plumage being of the usual colour. In the year 1839, I was told by Mr. G. J. Allman, that several light fawn-coloured birds of this species were shot near Bandon a few years previously, some of which he had seen in company with other rooks, that freely associated with them.

Mr. Poole has kindly furnished me with a history of the rook, as observed by himself in the county of Wexford. The following passages, &c., on points not hitherto treated of, are selected from it :—

"At the commencement of our rookery, the infant colony consisted of twelve pairs, the next season the number of nests was forty-six, and on the third it had increased to 176 nests, thus indicating, that allowing for deaths by disease or accident, the birds quadruple their numbers every year. A rather curious accident happened in our rookery. In a quarrel between two rooks one of

them fell on its back into the fork of an ash tree, from which it was unable to extricate itself, and died from the pressure.* Rooks sometimes scratch like hens, and I once in the month of June saw some busily engaged tearing ants, of a small black species, out of their ant-hills. They take great pleasure in washing themselves, and will walk deliberately into a river up to their bellies, and splash away like so many ducks. They frequent the banks of rivers during inundations, and occasionally even venture some way into the water in search of food."

My correspondent remarks, that in addition to its ordinary prey, he has observed the rook repeatedly fly up from the ground like a stonechat, to catch flies; to turn over the stones in very hot weather in search, as was believed, of beetles and worms; and to exhibit a carnivorous propensity so far as to fly off with the decayed body of a rat.

"About June and July, rooks suffer great privation, from the burnt up condition of the ground rendering it almost impossible to reach their natural sustenance: hence the proverb rife about here, 'As hungry as a June crow.' A large number of young ones remain all night in the open country, resorting separately to hedge-rows, or small groves, and seeming in a great degree to lose the congregating instinct of their species. The country-people think they can smell powder, and fear it even before it is exploded. A woman came to me lately for a little pinch to burn on a potato-ridge to keep off the crows."†

In the winter of 1846, about Christmas, these birds were frequently observed (by Mr. R. Warren, junr.,) to stoop down to the water in Cork harbour, and pick dead or dying sprats (*Clupea*

* "In the beginning of the breeding-season of the present year, a rook unfortunately got entangled in the thick branches of a large tree, adjacent to Castle Warren, the seat of Robert Warren, Esq., county of Cork. The other rooks seeing its hapless condition attacked, and soon put an end to its existence, notwithstanding the vigorous but ineffectual efforts of its mate to defend it. Since that time the dead body is daily visited by a rook, which also roosts by it every night. This rook is supposed to be the mate; if so, it is indeed "fidelity in death!" * Mr. R. Taylor of Belfast, who made the communication, has informed me that the rook roosted regularly as described, beside its ill-fated companion, for two months.

† Mr. Poole.

* *Zoologist*, June, 1848, p. 2146.

sprattus) from the surface with their bills. They seemed to live for some time almost wholly on these fish, among which there was a great fatality.

In Scotland, these birds have, by suiting themselves to circumstances, come under my observation in different ways from what they have done in Ireland. I have for many miles along the coast of Ayrshire met with them in the autumn, feeding among the fresh sea-weed or rejectamenta of the receding tide; and at other times they were crowded in search of food upon the heaps of sea-weed collected on the beach for manure. About two miles inland from Ballantrae, in Ayrshire, a few hundreds of these birds, in the autumn of 1839, regularly roosted on the ground upon a rising knoll in a pasture-field. I first saw them there at 8 o'clock, P.M., on the 20th of August; and afterwards, on returning late from grouse-shooting in distant moors, they were always to be seen. This roosting-place was in the midst of a cultivated district, in which there was no wood of sufficient age to be patronized by the rook.

At the commencement of a snow-storm in England, and after the ground became well covered, I was once amused at seeing a rook rolling in the snow, apparently enjoying itself as much as a Newfoundland dog could have done.* In summer I have met with the rook in Holland, France, and Switzerland, and in some parts of the first-named country have observed it to be as common as at its chief haunts in the British Islands. At the Hotel Bellevue, which is situated close to the king's park at the Hague, I for the first time experienced the evils of a rookery, the cawing from a closely adjacent one being so incessant from day-break, as to drive all sleep from me, unaccustomed as I was to such music;—this was at the end of May, when the calls of the young are almost constantly uttered.

The rook has attracted the attention of authors possessing a celebrity of very different kinds. In the Bracebridge Hall of Washington Irving, an admirable chapter is devoted to it. Gold-

* Waterton, in his Essays on Natural History, mentions a tame raven acting similarly.

smith gives a very interesting account of it in the Temple Gardens, London, as observed by himself. A most graphic description of its manner of life about Selborne is furnished by White. Sir Wm. Jardine introduces it in a picturesque manner as an adjunct to the scenery of the park. Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, in one of his series of very interesting papers on Scottish Rivers, published in Tait's Magazine, *—that on the *Tyne*—gives in connection with Ormiston Hall, a full account of the proceedings of a colony of rooks, "from morn to latest eve;" and Mr. Macgillivray, as if conceiving that the subject of the bird's habits by day had already been exhausted, imparts a new feature to the history of the species, by visiting a rookery at night, and relating the proceedings at that period.

THE JACKDAW.

Corvus monedula, Linn.

Is found throughout the island, especially where the labour of man is evinced by buildings, the plantation of trees, and the cultivation of the ground.

But it is much more interesting to meet with this bird in the bold and precipitous cliffs,—be they inland or marine,—which are its natural abode.

The basaltic precipices of the north-east of Ireland are much resorted to by these birds, as building haunts. I have also observed them in the month of October, of different years, at the approach of evening, to gather in as great numbers as during summer, to roost among the rocks at the Cavehill, near Belfast. At the wild peninsula of the Horn, county of Donegal, they breed in the marine cliffs, as they do within caverns of very small islands about three miles distant from the coast of Kerry (Neligan). On the 29th of May, 1836, I saw many jackdaws at the precipitous sandy banks rising above the beach of Lough Néagh, at Massareene deer-park, where they breed in holes, all of which were said by the gamekeeper to be the deserted burrows of rabbits. Jack-

* February, 1848, p. 98.

daws breed in numbers in the rabbit holes on low earthy knolls, in Hillsborough Park (Down). The gamekeeper one morning in May, 1847, took from 150 to 170 eggs out of the nests with his hands, without any digging. They were about arm's length from the entrance. The eggs were destroyed, on account of the birds being supposed to annoy the rabbits by partly filling up their burrows with sticks, numbers of which, that the jackdaws evidently could not get into the holes, lie about the place. The nests are built of dried grasses and roots, intermixed with a few pieces of stick. The eyes of the young birds can be seen by persons looking into the holes. Old trees are abundant in this demesne, as well as in Massareene Park, where these birds similarly take advantage of the burrows of the rabbit. At Springmount, county of Antrim, three or four pair build annually, like magpies, in the tree-tops. Jackdaws are more prolific than the rook or the grey crow; they occasionally lay six eggs.

June the 21st, 1842. At the cliffs adjacent to Dunluce Castle, on the northern coast of Antrim, I was much amused by witnessing the attack of jackdaws on a grey crow, which appeared over the cliffs where they build. First, one sallied boldly after and struck him repeatedly; it was almost instantly joined by a second, which was immediately followed by a third, all of them dashing at the crow, and striking him both from above and below. The persecuted bird turned back and alighted on the turf near the summit of the cliff, as did two of the jackdaws also, but at a respectful distance. The crow maintained his ground boldly, *and looked*,—for all was conducted on both sides in solemn silence, —as much as to say, "Come on, I'm ready for you both." The jackdaws too, for a time, remained perfectly still, but eventually approached within a yard or two of their enemy, and then flew off, leaving him at the very spot on which he had alighted. The whole was pantomimic, not a note being uttered by any of the three birds. Soon after the jackdaw's departure, the crow took wing and flew again over the cliff, when he was attacked just as before, with the difference, that on this occasion the jackdaws were very vociferous, and the croak of the crow was occasionally uttered. He did not

mind their buffetings in the air, this time, but held on his course: —such, I have remarked to be the usual proceeding of grey crows when driven by magpies from the vicinity of their nests. Though they will return again and again after being beaten off, I have never seen them offer the least violence to the parent-birds, thus always seeming as if they were too much conscience-stricken to do so. To-day, the crow could hardly be doing any harm, as a number of the young jackdaws were able to fly about; there may however have been some young broods. When walking along Carnlough bay, on the 25th of May, I remarked several jackdaws flying singly towards the cliff in which they build, each of them displaying beneath the bill a well filled pouch of food for their mates or young. How singularly these and other species of the *Corvidæ* sometimes drop down the perpendicular face of a precipice as if they were shot!

A pair of these birds built annually for a number of years in the same hole of a wall about twelve feet from the ground, at Castle Warren. Jackdaws caused great annoyance for some years by building in the chimneys of this castle, and filling them up with sticks;—of which, a few nearly six feet in length, were used. Eventually a wire-grating was placed across the top of the chimneys to prevent their access, which it did effectually. They continued, however, to re-visit them every season, with the view of resuming occupation.

Church towers * and steeples, as well as chimneys,† are commonly resorted to for nesting-places. They are generally described as late breeding birds; but a most accurate observer once observed them on the 22nd of March, carrying building materials to a chimney in Belfast; as he did to other chimneys on the 20th of that month: on the 7th of April, he saw them conveying food, as

* In the tower of a country church near Belfast, jackdaws had in the course of time accumulated such quantities of sticks, that cart-loads of them had to be removed before some repairs on the building could be commenced.

† The burning of Shane's Castle (the mansion of Earl O'Neil, situated on the borders of Lough Neagh), which happened about thirty years ago, was believed to have been caused by the dry sticks forming the nests of jackdaws in one of the chimneys, having caught fire. One of the fires at York Minster has been attributed to the same cause.

he believed, for their young. The first foray of certain country jackdaws, in the early morning, is to the town, where they are very punctual in making their appearance: on the 11th of June, I once noted their arrival at 45 minutes past 3 o'clock.* Here they are quite innocuous; but in the country, they occasionally levy contributions. Montagu has remarked, that they are "fond of cherries," to the truth of which, many of the gardeners about Belfast could bear testimony. Of all birds they are the most destructive to this fruit. A friend on one occasion coming upon a number regaling in one of his cherry-trees, fired at them, without reflecting on the damage he must necessarily do to the tree, and five fell dead to the ground. They and other species, particularly blackbirds (*Turdus Merula*), for some years entirely consumed the crop of cherries on a number of fine tall standard trees which could not conveniently be netted, and in consequence of their depredations, the trees were all cut down. The cherry-trees in the garden of another friend, resident in the neighbourhood of Belfast, were sacrificed for a similar reason. In a district well known to me, jackdaws generally associate with rooks, and hence participate both in the good and evil done by these birds to the farm; though, as mentioned in treating of the rook, the former greatly preponderates. In a wild and uncultivated part of the northern coast of the island, I have in summer remarked flocks of these birds feeding on the sea-shore between tide-marks, and among large stones, grown over with *Fuci*.

The sites chosen by the jackdaw for perching are frequently amusing. I have observed four of them, in flying to a vane, alight with the most correct regularity on the letters N. E. S. W., while a fifth surmounted the ball, and thus would they remain stationed for some time, looking "part and parcel" of the weathercock. On the head of Nelson, as he stands erect in all his majesty on the top of the pillar which bears his name in Sackville Street, Dublin, I have seen the jackdaw alight, and impart an air

* On the 15th of June, 1847, jackdaws were calling and flying about London at 3 o'clock in the morning.

of the ludicrous to the hero of Trafalgar.* But under similar circumstances, this bird would not scruple to perch even

"On the bald first Cæsar's head."

Three jackdaws, entirely white, were reared in a chimney in Belfast a few years ago, and about the same time two of a similar colour were brought up at a demesne in the neighbourhood, where they were observed associating, both in feeding and on wing, with their sable brethren, who acknowledged them as kindred. Unfortunately, they were persecuted to the death by man on account of their colour. They proved to be perfect albinoes, the bills and legs, as well as the plumage, being white; their hoary moustaches gave them a most venerable appearance, though in reality they were young birds of the year.

On the 29th of June, 1835, I saw many jackdaws about the fissures of the lofty chalk-cliffs rising above the river Derwent, near Matlock in Derbyshire, where it was presumed they built, and on the next evening heard them call there so late as ten o'clock, which tended to confirm the conjecture. In the spring and summer of 1841, I observed jackdaws equally numerous in the Morea and the Archipelago, as they are in similar localities at home. They appeared about the ruins of the old castle at Patras; the high western cliffs of the island of Sphacteria (the scene of Byron's Corsair), and on the rocky islet, lying to the north-east of the entrance to Port Nausa, in the island of Paros.

* Mr. R. Patterson of Belfast has contributed the following note :—"I remember several years ago, a near relative, who then lived in Dublin, had a pet jackdaw, which answered to the name of Jack, and was regularly in the habit of performing a feat, which might baffle many a person who talks about 'the centre of gravity.' When my friend after dinner had mixed his tumbler of punch, and called 'Jack,' the bird instantly came, and perched on the edge of the glass, where he poised himself so nicely that it was never upset. I believe, that on such occasions he used to get from his master a bit of white sugar, which he ate while thus resting on the tumbler."

THE MAGPIE.

Pica caudata.
Corvus pica, Linn.

Has long been common throughout the island.

Smith, in his History of the county of Cork, published in 1749, remarks, that it "was not known in Ireland seventy years ago, but is now very common." Rutty, in his Natural History of Dublin, observes, that "it is a foreigner, naturalized here since the latter end of King James the Second's reign, and is said to have been driven hither by a strong wind." (!) Dean Swift thus alludes to it in his Journal to Stella:—"Pray observe the inhabitants about Wexford; they are old English; see what they have particular in their manners, name, and language. Magpies have been always there, and nowhere else in Ireland, till of late years." * To a commentary on this, by Mr. Ogilby, published in Yarrell's British Birds (vol. ii. p. 111), the reader is referred. In the Irish Statutes, 17 Geo. II. ch. 10, a reward is offered for magpies, along with other "four, and two-footed vermin."†

* Derricke, who wrote his Image of Ireland, in Queen Elizabeth's time, says—

"No pies to pluck the thatch from house
Are breed in Irishe grounde,
But worse than pies, the same to burne
A thousande maie be founde."

Letter xxvi. vol. ii. p. 309, 2nd edit.

† The following notice of the magpie appears in the 1st volume of Tracts, printed for the Irish Archæological Society. In "A brife Description of Ireland, made in this yeere 1589, by Robert Payne," it is remarked—"There is neither mol, *pye*, nor carren crow." In a note to this, contributed by Dr. Aquilla Smith of Dublin, it is observed: "As to the magpie (*Pica caudata*), our author is probably correct, for Derricke, who wrote in 1581, in his Image of Ireland, says—[—the four lines above quoted are introduced here]. 'Ireland,' says Moryson, in 1617, 'hath neither singing nightingall, nor *chattering pye*, nor undermining moule.' Itinerary, part iii. b. iii. p. 160. [The extract elsewhere given from Smith's Cork appears here.] The earliest notice of this bird as indigenous in Ireland is in Keogh's Zoologia Medicinalis Hibernica, Dublin, 8vo, 1739: he merely mentions the 'magpie or pianet, *Hib. Maggidipye*.' This evidently Anglo-Irish word, for we have no name for it in the ancient Irish language, favours the opinion held by our best-informed naturalists, that this bird is of recent introduction into this country."

This bird, like certain other species, has increased and multiplied to a goodly extent in Ireland. The intelligent and trustworthy gamekeeper at Tollymore Park (co. Down), the seat of the Earl of Roden, informed me, in Sept. 1836, that having ranged the country for many miles around the park, he, by robbing their nests, shooting and trapping them, destroyed in one half year 732 birds and eggs. At the assizes held in the spring and autumn of every year, he "presented" for vermin killed, and on the occasion in question received 12*l.* for magpies, &c. So long as a reward was offered for their heads, he killed immense numbers of these birds.* In some particular districts of the north of Ireland, where the farms are small, and every cottage possesses a few sheltering trees, the magpie's nest is almost a certain accompaniment. The trees there being generally the open-topped ash, render the dark ball of the nest visible from so great a distance, that I have often reckoned a considerable number from one point of view. The magpie builds rather early, and in all kinds of trees, none being greater favourites than fine old hawthorns: the eggs not uncommonly amount to seven in number. Wm. Ogilby, Esq., favoured me with the following note, in 1847. It relates to a part of the county of Tyrone:—"From the immunities accorded to this mischievous bird by some of the peasantry in my neighbourhood, under the apprehension that it is sure to revenge an injury by carrying off the young ducks and chickens of its persecutors, magpies had increased to so inconvenient an extent, that I last year employed two lads to rob their nests and bring me the eggs and young. The liberal reward of a penny per egg, and three pence for every young bird, soon thinned their numbers, and in a few weeks time there was not a nest to be seen for miles around. The old birds mostly deserted the country, but in one instance the persecution they met with only served to develope the extraordinary sagacity of a pair of magpies. Late in the season,—if I recollect right, about the middle of July,—one of the lads brought me a young brood from a nest which I afterwards inspected, and which was artfully concealed and built without down or any large collec-

* Rewards were discontinued two or three years previous to 1836.

tion of materials likely to attract notice, at the bottom of a low thick hedge not far from my own house. The labourers, though constantly about the place, had never observed the old birds, and the boy told me, that it was only by concealing himself for a considerable time, on observing the parent bird collecting food, that he succeeded in watching her to her retreat." Mr. Hewitson informs us, that "magpies, which with us are so suspicious of wrong, build their nests under the eaves of the Norwegian cottages."* Although protected themselves, they exhibit no more amiability towards a wounded companion there than elsewhere. My late friend George Matthews, Esq., observed in a note on these birds, that he met with them in great numbers along the coast of Norway, where they were very tame; and added, that one which he knocked over with a stone, was immediately set upon and killed by the others. The late Mr. John Montgomery, of Locust Lodge, near Belfast, remarked, that "when angry or alarmed for the safety of its young, the magpie is not only very clamorous, but pecks the branch on which it rests, violently tearing the bark off in its rage." On the 9th of May, I once saw a grey crow attack the nest of a magpie, when the latter, "single-handed," boldly repulsed and drove the intruder to some distance. The crow nevertheless returned to the nest several times, but was always beaten off without effecting its evil purpose. Bold as the magpie is in defence of its own nest, I have more than once seen it beaten away by a pair of missel-thrushes from the vicinity of theirs.

It has often been stated, that if one of a pair of magpies having a nest be shot, another mate is soon found; the period, according to Mr. Selby, "sometimes scarcely exceeding a day;" but a gentleman of my acquaintance assures me, that on his shooting one of a pair of these birds in the forenoon, the survivor had found another partner before evening. Perhaps the most remarkable instance of widowed magpies becoming provided with new partners, is that recorded by the celebrated Dr. Jenner, in the Philosophical Transactions for 1824 (p. 21). These birds are

* Eggs, Brit. Birds. Introd. p. xv.

often so far gregarious as to roost in considerable numbers at particular groves, near their feeding-ground, to which they resort in straggling flocks: I have thus reckoned twenty-six on wing together, when the distance between the first and last, was like that of an ill-matched pack of hounds during the chace. November the 20th, 1838, was a dull, dark, true November day throughout, and so early as half-past two o'clock, P.M., I saw about twenty of these birds that had evidently retired to roost for the night. On being alarmed they flew from a fine old willow on the banks of the Lagan, and looked very beautiful as they rose together.

Magpies are very generally persecuted with us on account of their evil propensities. One friend complains that his garden has suffered much from their depredations on cherries and other fruit; another, that the eggs of game, &c., are greatly destroyed by them: —their propensity for eggs is taken advantage of for their destruction, and they become victims to the trap baited with those of our domestic fowl. Grain, too, they certainly consume, but their numbers are not anywhere so great as to do much injury to it. That they do considerable good, I have had positive evidence from an examination of the contents of their stomachs (supplied me by bird-preservers) at various times, but particularly in winter; when almost every one contained insects (chiefly *Coleoptera*), or the remains of mice and slugs, (the internal shell of these, constituting the genus *Limacellus,* Brard., only remaining), mixed with which occasionally appeared oats and other grain. In winter, the magpie, as well as others of the *Corvidæ*, is of great service to the public, by resorting in numbers to such meadows as are manured with the offensive refuse of the slaughter-house, and feeding on the titbits.* On the 1st of Sept., 1847, I was interested in observing one of these handsome birds perched on a tall rowan or mountain-ash tree, close to Holywood House, picking off and eating the ripe scarlet berries, as eagerly as any of the thrush genus could have done.

* Since writing my account of the magpie, I find that this and several other particulars noticed are treated of by Mr. Waterton, in his Essays on Natural History. His description of the bird throughout is excellent.

On mentioning the circumstance to my friends resident there, they remarked, that in former years several of these birds were seen perched at the same time in this tree, when the berries were ripe, though no attention was given to whether they were feeding on them or not; judging from what I observed, they doubtless were so.

By the late George Matthews, Esq., I was informed, that a trustworthy warrener at Springvale, county of Down (the seat of his grandfather, Major Matthews), assured him, that he once saw a magpie fly some distance out to sea with a stoat or weasel fastened to it, when he with some other men launched a boat, and followed to observe the issue. They found the magpie lying dead upon the water. The quadruped had disappeared, and as they conjectured, had been drowned; but Mr. Matthews thought it might have made its way ashore, as he had often seen these animals swim admirably. Montagu, in the Supplement to his Ornithological Dictionary, mentions his having been witness to a weasel killing a carrion crow on the ground, the latter being in the first instance the aggressor.

Once, in the month of May, when driving between Larne and Glenarm, I was surprised to observe a lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus*) hovering very low over, and making a stoop at a ditch-bank near the road. On looking attentively, however, a magpie was discovered changing its position from whatever side of the bush the gull hovered over, to the other side. After a short time, the gull took its departure, and then the magpie flew along the bank with some whitish-coloured object in its bill. The gull returned and played the same part over again, as the magpie likewise did; the object of the latter, from the commencement, being evidently to conceal itself from the gull's observation. On seeing the food in the magpie's bill, I had no doubt of its being the gull's prey, which having been accidentally dropped, was carried off by the magpie, whose thievish cunning it was amusing to witness, though I pitied the honest sea-bird, for being thus *gulled*.

Magpies are so bold, as apparently, through mere wantonness, to persecute birds that would seem to be more than a match for

them: the beautiful kestrel or windhover they occasionally annoy. Towards the peregrine falcon they dare hardly show any impertinence, but the curiosity which I once saw exhibited by a pair of them towards a bird of this species, was highly amusing. A trained falcon at Fort William, near Belfast, on being given its liberty, alighted, after taking a few circuits through the air, in a small tree, where first one, and then another magpie, likewise perched, without exhibiting the least fear, and with the intention only, to all appearance, of examining it more closely. They gradually approached until almost touching the hawk; one indeed seemed to strike it, immediately after which, they both flew to a tree close by, and commenced an incessant chattering. This was continued so earnestly for some time, that it could be nothing less than a discussion upon the merits of the strange bird. When in the tree with the hawk, they maintained a respectful silence. At the same place, a tame magpie and a sheep of a peculiar variety, whose fleece hung nearly to the ground, were great friends, and generally associated together. The favourite perch of the bird was on the back of the sheep, which animal became innocently a receiver of stolen goods, as the magpie concealed his pilferings in the thick wool of its body. It sometimes hopped after the sheep, biting at its legs; and, through mischief, or a natural carnivorous propensity, was very partial to pecking at the bare heels of beggars who came about the house, very much, as may be supposed, to their annoyance. Here, also, two magpies were proficients in talking. One, without any teaching, learnt all the phrases of a parrot kept in a neighbouring cage.* The other was taught several words and short sentences, by their being repeated to it by its master; the most comical perhaps of which was "pretty-poll," as passing strangers, on hearing the well-known words, turned round to look at the parrot, and saw only impudent "mag" instead. But any-

* It would seem that, in a wild state also, either this species, or a nearly allied one, will imitate the notes of other birds. Mr. Nuttall, who, from a knowledge of the bird both in Europe and America, considers the common magpie of the two continents identical, remarks:—"I one day observed a small flock, and among the fraternity heard one chattering familiarly in the varied tone of the cat-bird, as he sat on a bough by the water, where birds might become his prey."—Audubon's Ornithological Biography, vol. iv. p. 409.

thing more on this subject, would be only taking a leaf out of the history of a pet magpie, communicated by my friend Dr. Stevelly, Professor of Natural Philosophy in Belfast College. He remarks:—

"When a boy, I succeeded in rearing a magpie that was taken from the nest; he became much attached to me, and long before he could fly, would follow me about with a curious kind of sideling hop, and even at this time of life began to show great archness, running after the peasant children, who, in the south of Ireland, go for the most part without shoes and stockings, and pecking at their bare heels; and then instantly looking up to see if punishment were meditated, of which if he saw the least symptom, he would escape with wonderful celerity. He became so adroit at length at this amusement, that the children who came near the house were much afraid of him; when his beak became stronger, he also attacked dogs in the same manner, but always with much and very droll caution. He flew well and strongly before I attempted to confine him in the slightest degree, and roamed at large round my father's place; but when I wished him to come home in the evening, one or two loud calls of his name 'Jack' were sure to bring him from some neighbouring high tree on which he perched, to my shoulder, which was a very favourite resting-place; when there, it was a common practice of his gently to run his beak between my lips or into my ear, with that peculiar motion which pigeons are observed to use when they caress each other; the tickling sensation which this process caused, when my ear was in question, made me always submit with difficulty, and I was frequently obliged to withdraw my head suddenly with a shudder; at this he always seemed highly delighted, and used to chatter with a guttural sound not unlike Irish words.

"The country people in the south of Ireland have a manner of calling each other from a distance by bending their fore-finger, putting it into their mouth, and producing a very loud and shrill whistle. This whistle 'Jack' became very expert in imitating, and it was a favourite amusement of his, to sit on a very hot day on the top of the house, and if he chanced to espy any person at a distance, as, for example, the market-boy riding into town, a whistle from Jack, repeated if necessary, was sure to bring him back, however great his hurry, under the impression that some important commission had been forgotten, or that his presence was required at the house or farm-yard; the length of the avenue, and a gentle slope in it at about a quarter of a mile distance

from the house, rendered this trick very easy to be practised, and he seemed to take great delight in it when successful, and many a hearty curse he received from the wearied subject of his practical joke, as soon as he had discovered the individual, who had so importunately called him back.

"He was particularly fond of any shining article, such as spoons and trinkets; these he frequently stole, and we came upon his treasure-house in a laughable way. There was an old gentleman, a great friend of my father, who resided with us almost continually. He was of a peculiarly studious disposition, but from a deformity in his person used generally to read standing, with his arms and breast resting on the back of a chair, and the book placed on a table before him; after having read for a while, it was his habit to take off his spectacles, lay them beside him, blow his nose, take a pinch of snuff, and after a few moments, pondering what he had been reading, resume the spectacles and proceed. One very warm day, I lay reading at the end of a room, in which there was an open glass door leading to the greenhouse; in this room the old gentleman was most intently pursuing his studies at a little distance from me. My attention was soon arrested by seeing the magpie perched upon the chair near him, eyeing him most intently and with a very arch expression, and at length, in an instant, he had with a most active hop touched the table, secured the red leather spectacle-case, and was out of the glass door with the most noiseless wing and with a very graceful motion. I remained quiet, resolved to see the end of the joke; after a few seconds' absence, 'Jack' was again at his post, eyeing the old gentleman with a most inquisitive and yet business-like glance; it was nearly impossible to resist the ludicrous impression produced by the entire scene: at length off came the spectacles, and out came the pocket-handkerchief and snuff-box; quick as thought Jack had invaded the table, and was out of the open door with the prize, which I have no doubt had from the beginning been the object of his covetous admiration, while they were on the nose of the old gentleman. This time the magpie did not return, either because he found it more difficult to reach his storehouse with the spectacles than with the case, or because, having gained the object of his ambition, he conceived his presence no longer necessary. At length the period of rumination having elapsed, the old gentleman set about replacing the spectacles; as soon as his surprise had abated at not finding them with his hands

beside him on the table, he removed the chair and groped about on the carpet, then raised the book and examined every part of the table. Not being able to restrain myself any longer, I exploded in laughter; and of course I was instantly suspected of playing off a practical joke, and charged with taking the spectacles, but at length succeeded in convincing him I had never risen from the sofa on which I reclined; but after a good deal of laughing, and two or three other members of the family having been attracted to the room by the hubbub, I was compelled, under cross-examination, to own that I had witnessed 'Jack's' abstractions. The question then became serious how the articles were to be recovered; some person suggested to leave a teaspoon near him and watch him. This was accordingly done, but his motions were so rapid that he eluded us all, seeming at first to pop completely over the house; at length, by placing two or three persons in favourable positions, he was '*marked*' in a leaden valley between a double part of the roof; and this having been closely searched, a deposit was discovered not only of the things which 'Jack' had that day carried off, but also of some articles which had been for some time supposed to be lost, but respecting which a breath of suspicion as to him had never been entertained. This day's successful foray led to his losing his entire store, no doubt in the midst of his triumphal rejoicing.

"His thieving propensities seemed to gather strength from this period; but I have little doubt many articles which were lost were set down to his account, without sufficient evidence that he was the thief. A valuable brooch, which belonged to a lady who was on a visit with my mother, was at length lost, and every finger pointed to 'Jack' as the thief; this charge acquired probability from the fact that he had on the previous day overturned and destroyed a very valuable writing-desk in her room, while examining too anxiously some of the silver ornaments of its bottles; an order was forthwith issued by my father that a cage must be made for him, and the absolute liberty he had heretofore enjoyed, be somewhat curtailed. I submitted the more cheerfully to this order, as his flights from home were now becoming obviously longer, and on one or two occasions he had not returned all night; and although at these times he made his appearance next morning, hungry and cold, and with a very rueful aspect, yet I was beginning to fear that he would at length acquire the habits necessary for shifting for himself, and stay away altogether. Accordingly he was caged; at first he furiously

attacked the wooden bars of the cage and broke some of them, but in places so scattered, that in no one place did he succeed in making a breach large enough for his exit. He pined very much at the confinement, and the beauty of his plumage was much deteriorated, so that I at length began to let him fly about: his delight on these occasions was excessive and often laughably exhibited; but his distress when again seized on, to be returned to his cage, was at least equally strongly expressed. He used to screech long and loudly, and resist with beak and talon; hence he soon began, when liberated, to fly straight off and remain away for several hours. In one of these rambles, a woman returning from Cork, was astonished to see him stand so tamely on the public road beside a small pond at which he occasionally drank; she came near him, and held out a herring towards him, which he very thankfully began to eat, when she secured him, cut one of his wings, and on reaching her home put him among some poultry, who beat him most unmercifully. It was four or five days before I was able to discover his prison, the woman living three or four miles off; and when I did, and had paid a few shillings for his ransom, he came home in most piteous plight; his spirit was quite broken, his plumage much injured and dingy, and except for the well-known 'Jack,' and one or two other words, chiefly Irish, which he pronounced, I should have doubted or disbelieved his identity. I however pulled the feathers off his wings (which were mere stumps on one side), and by care he was beginning to recover his vivacity; when, attempting to drink at a barrel, in which, when he could fly, he was in the habit of splashing, he fell in, and was drowned before his danger was discovered. I never felt so bereaved as upon the death of poor 'Jack.'"

On one occasion in my young days, a schoolfellow about fourteen years of age, who had not before been at any dramatic representation, was present at the performance of 'The Maid and the Magpie,' in the Belfast theatre. On seeing that the woman was about to be executed for the theft committed by the bird, he gallantly roared out at the top of his voice, from the pit, that she was innocent, for he had seen the magpie steal the spoons. I well remember the laugh of the school being turned against him on the following morning.

This species rarely exhibits variety in its plumage: a white one

frequented the demesne at Malone House, near Belfast, for two or three years; and a friend once saw three pure white ones, which were brought from the neighbourhood to town for sale;—they had probably been reared in the same nest. In January, 1846, a white specimen of the magpie was killed in the county of Down, by John R. Garner, Esq., of Garnerville, at the same shot with another in ordinary plumage. It was noted by me at the time,—"as almost wholly white, but a few black feathers appear indiscriminately over the plumage except in the tail, which, save a small patch of black towards the point of one feather, is altogether white. The tarsi and toes are pied flesh-colour and black; the bill wholly black." This bird and another, shot in the neighbourhood in February, 1848, were presented to the Belfast Museum. The wings of the latter were almost wholly white, and all the parts of the plumage usually black of different shades, exhibited more white than black, the tail having least of this colour. On one feather of its longest pair, a little white appeared for about an inch along the edge from the tip upwards; the next pair in length had a good deal of pure white towards the tips; those exterior to them retained their ordinary hue. The tarsi and toes also were partially white, as usual in albino varieties of birds; the base ("plante") of the toes were almost wholly white, as well as the hinder portion of the tarsi, for about half an inch upwards from the base of the hind toes.

In the month of May, I met with the magpie about Smyrna: it is common over the greater part of the European continent.

Sir. Wm. Jardine (in his work on British Birds) admirably points out the favourite haunts of the magpie; and Mr. Macgillivray gives a very characteristic description of its manners in a wild state. The latter observes, that "in the Outer Hebrides, the Shetland and Orkney islands, it is never seen," vol. i. p. 565. Dr. J. D. Marshall has remarked, that from the total want of wood in the island of Rathlin, off the Giant's Causeway, the magpie is very scarce.

THE JAY.

Garrulus glandarius, Linn. (sp.)

Can only now be claimed as an indigenous bird by districts in the southern half of Ireland.

Smith, in his History of the county of Waterford (1745), states that "the jay is pretty common in our woods," and in his History of Cork, enumerates it among the birds of that county. Dr. Burkitt now considers the species as not uncommon in the wooded districts of the former, as about Curraghmore, &c.; and Mr. R. Ball views it as rare in the latter county; in the summer of 1837, he saw young birds which were taken from a nest near Youghal. In 1839, I was informed that the jay, owing to its being protected, had of late years become common in Lord Bandon's park (Cork). One only has been heard of by Mr. R. Chute as seen in Kerry:—in the demesne of Dromore. "The jays must be indigenous about Clonmel, the oldest inhabitants remember them to be much more plentiful than they now are: they still breed in the adjacent woods, but were formerly to be seen close to the town."* "In Rehill wood, county of Tipperary, they have been considered indigenous, for two or three generations back, at least." † In some parts of Kilkenny, Queen's county, and Kildare, they are to be found. About Portarlington, they are particularly numerous, and to go out there for a day's jay shooting is not an uncommon practice. About Portumna, they are said to be met with, but not frequently. In Rutty's Natural History of Dublin, the jay appears as one of the birds of that county, which it still frequents.‡

I am not aware of the existence of this bird either now, or for a long time past, in the north of the island, although there are many districts apparently well suited to its abode, and every year becoming more so from the increasing age of well-grown timber. Dubourdieu, in his Survey of the county of Antrim, remarks:—"The jay was much more frequent before the woods at Port-

* Mr. R. Davis, 1837. † Dr. Harvey of Cork. ‡ Mr. R. Ball.

more were cut; it is still [1812] however to be met with about Shane's Castle, and other woods at the borders of the lake [Neagh]." I have been unable to verify its being there at so late a period. It must not be taken for granted, that the bird called jay in the north of Ireland is the *Garrulus glandarius*, as that name is frequently bestowed on the missel-thrush (*Turdus viscivorus* *). The latest evidence known to me of the occurrence of the true jay in that quarter, is afforded by a venerable friend, who more than sixty years ago, received three young birds from a nest in Portmore park, on the borders of Lough Neagh, once rich in fine woods of oak, but which have long since fallen before the axe. In the Irish Statutes, (17th of George II., chap. 10,) a reward is offered for the head of the jay, together with that of the magpie and others of the *Corvidæ*. Mr. Yarrell seems to imagine that it is to the numbers killed in consequence of this reward being offered, that the species generally became less numerous with us; but as the jay can, like the *Corvidæ*, for which a reward was at the same time offered, take very good care of itself, I should attribute its decrease to other and more natural causes. This author mentions the jay as frequenting most of the wooded districts of England. With reference to its distribution in Ireland, it is desirable to ascertain how widely it is found in Scotland. Sir Wm. Jardine observes, that "as we proceed northward it becomes much more local, though by no means rare, where it is found frequenting generally the older wood around private seats, and in parks, and some of the forests in the middle highlands. It is common both in Perth and Argyleshire, but we are not sure that it extends to the forests of the far north." † I should think that the jay is not *generally* distributed throughout Perthshire, as I have been daily in fine old woods well suited to the species, in the north-west of the county without seeing it. In the neighbourhood of Dunkeld, this bird is not uncommon. About Aberarder, Inverness-shire, where there is a great extent of wood, though not so aged as the jay prefers, it has not occurred to me.

* This bird is correctly remarked by Dubourdieu to be "now frequent," so that the true jay would seem to be the bird he alluded to.

† Brit. Birds, vol. ii. p. 253.

I have never met with this beautiful bird in a wild state, in Ireland, but have had the gratification of seeing it among the natural wood about the northern extremity of Loch Lomond, and about Coniston Water, in Lancashire. In October, 1847, I remarked jays to be noisy, but difficult to be seen, in some of the plantations, particularly of oak, about the neighbourhood of Tunbridge Wells. I was sorry to observe numbers of them nailed to the gable wall of a barn of Mr. Waldo's, near Hever, along with magpies, crows, and four-footed vermin. The jay has come under my notice in Switzerland and Italy; in the latter country, on the richly wooded banks of the Nera, not far from its confluence with the Tiber.

The Nutcracker (*Nucifraga Caryocatactes*, Briss.,) cannot be announced with any certainty as having been met with in Ireland. The late Mr. Templeton's MS. contains a note that one "had been shot at Silvermines, county of Tipperary, by Mr. J. Lewis." Unfortunately, no more information is given. This bird is a rare visitant to England and Scotland.

THE GREATER SPOTTED WOODPECKER.

Picus major, Linn.

Has in very few instances been noticed.

Templeton records one obtained in August, 1802, in the county of Londonderry, having been sent to Dr. M'Donnell of Belfast; and a second having been met with since:—of the former, a beautifully coloured drawing made by Mr. Templeton is in the possession of his family. A specimen which I saw in the museum of the Royal Dublin Society in 1834, was stated to have been killed on the banks of the canal near the metropolis in December, 1831; another was seen in company with it. About the same year a *P. major* was procured at St. Johnstown, county of Tipperary.* In the autumn of 1835, one was killed near Drumcliff, county of Sligo.† On Nov. 13th, 1839, a male bird of this species,—but not in adult plumage,—was shot at Castlereagh, near Belfast, by Mr. Greenfield, and liberally presented to the Belfast Museum. It

* Davis. † Ball.

was "very tame," and was engaged pecking into a tree when fired at. It seemed to be unaccompanied by any of its species.

Towards the end of the year 1845, four of these woodpeckers were obtained in different counties, ranging from north to south. One shot on the 29th of October at Carrick, the seat of Colonel Blacker, near Portadown, county of Armagh, was sent to Belfast to be preserved, and came under my inspection. This bird had almost attained perfect adult plumage,—a very few red feathers still remained on the top of the head,—but was in high moult, and, in the process of being skinned, so many feathers came out as to render it unfit to be set up. Mrs. Blacker informed me, that this woodpecker had kept about the old trees around the house at Carrick, for a month previous to being shot,—which was done contrary to orders,—and that the noise occasioned by its pecking was heard for some time before this was known to proceed from a bird. I have been told by T. W. Warren, Esq., of Dublin, that one was procured on the 15th of November, on the estate of the Hon. Somerset Maxwell, near Newtownbarry, county of Wexford; and that on the 6th of December, another (a female) was killed near Bagnalstown, county of Carlow:—they were seen by my informant in a fresh state. On the 17th of December, a beautiful specimen, shot the day before at Edenderry, near Belfast, by Houston Russell, Esq., was brought to me for examination. It exhibited precisely the markings shown in Yarrell's figure. The only red appearing on the head, was in two small feathers tipped with that colour. This bird was in pen-feathers, but was fit to be set up: had it been killed a fortnight sooner, it would not have been so. On dissection, it proved a female, although red appeared in the plumage of the head; its stomach was entirely filled with the remains of one species of coleopterous insect, "apparently an *Hylurgus*" (A. H. Haliday). On October the 20th, 1848, one of these woodpeckers was shot within three miles of the town of Wicklow.*

I have little doubt that these birds, and the one obtained in 1839, visited Ireland on their migratory movement southward,

* Mr. T. W. Warren,

like those noticed by Mr. Selby as frequently occurring in the months of October and November, in Northumberland :—at which period also, the few individuals known by Sir Wm. Jardine to have been obtained in the counties of Dumfries and Roxburgh, were met with. Mr. Selby has seen this species on the banks of the Dee and Spey, but it seems to be known in Scotland, as in Ireland, merely as an accidental visitant. In some parts of England it is resident, especially in "the southern and midland counties" (Yarrell). I have met with the *Picus major* in its native haunts, only in the richly wooded and picturesque valley of Sarnen, Switzerland.

Smith, in his History of Cork, remarks under "Hoopoe,"—"Mr. Willoughby ranks it among the woodpeckers, of which I have not yet seen one in this county." In the same author's History of Waterford, there appears "*Picus Martis*, the woodpecker, a bird rare in this county:" can *P. martius* be meant? Rutty enumerates the "*Picus varius minor*, lesser spotted woodpecker," as one of the birds of the county of Dublin; and it likewise appears in Dr. Patrick Browne's Catalogue of the Birds of Ireland, probably copied from Rutty. All these notices of woodpeckers are very unsatisfactory. *Picus major* is the only species that can be positively announced as Irish.

The Great Black Woodpecker (*Picus martius*) is reported as a very rare visitant to England. It was noticed by Sibbald among the Birds of Scotland, but nothing else is known of the species in that country.

The Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*), which is common to the wooded districts of England, is not found in Scotland (Jard.: Macgil.). I have been told that it frequents an old wood in the county of Donegal, but no proof was ever afforded. When in Dublin on the 1st of Feb., 1835, I saw in the possession of a bird-preserver, a fresh example of this species, which was accordingly believed to have been shot in Ireland; but on inquiry from the owner, I learned that it had been sent to him from England; its stomach was entirely filled with ants. Other recent specimens have been received by bird-preservers in Dublin, but no satisfactory statement respecting the place where they were killed, could be procured.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Picus minor*) is found from Yorkshire southward in England (Yarr.), but is not known in Scotland.

The Wryneck (*Yunx Torquilla*, Linn.). There is no record of this species having ever been met with in Ireland. It is chiefly found in the south-eastern counties of England, but also visits the western and northern. It has rarely been seen in Scotland. On the 29th of April, 1841, I saw one among some shrubby plants in the island of Sphacteria, which bounds the western side of the fine bay of Navarino. On the 25th of the same month, a wryneck, which alighted in H.M.S. Beacon, when about sixty miles to the south-east of Calabria, was captured.

The Nuthatch (*Sitta europæa*) sent to a bird-preserver in the metropolis, was, on the same presumptive evidence as the green woodpecker, mentioned to me as an Irish bird; but on inquiry it was found to have been killed in Wales. This species is not known to have ever visited Ireland; it is said to be pretty generally distributed in England; but not to be found in Scotland. (Jard.: Macgil.)

THE TREE CREEPER.

Certhia familiaris, Linn.

Inhabits districts generally throughout Ireland in which old wood prevails, and is everywhere resident.

Owing to its habits, this is perhaps of all our native birds the least known. To the ornithologist it is particularly interesting, from being the only one of the zogodactyle birds indigenous to the island; its presence, too, throughout the winter is an additional attraction. In the woods of the counties of Down, Antrim, and Fermanagh,* this bird has occurred to me. It is found in the north of the county of Donegal; † about Dublin and Youghal; ‡ is common in some parts of Westmeath, and about Killaloe; ‖ in Tipperary; § and in Kerry.¶ Mr. Poole remarks that the creeper

* Here I have seen this bird close to the house at Florence Court; and a friend living near Belfast has observed it creeping up the yard-wall attached to his dwelling-house. There is in reality nothing remarkable in such cases: they are mentioned, as some persons imagine that the creeper never leaves the depth of woods.

† J. V. Stewart. ‡ Ball. ‖ Rev. T. Knox.

§ Davis. ¶ Neligan.

is not uncommon in the wooded parts of the county of Wexford, adding, that "in climbing, it presses its tail very closely against the trees, so that it looks like a moving excrescence of the bark."

Such of these birds as have come under my observation, though apparently aware of my presence, never exhibited any shyness, but admitted of a near approach, when it was extremely interesting to observe the regular, quick, and business-like manner in which they searched for their food. Now one would appear moving in a straight line up the trunks of the largest pines, from near the base until attaining the summit; then would be seen ascending the next tree, by spirally winding round it, the effect being much heightened by its breast appearing of a silvery whiteness, in contrast with the dark-coloured bark. I was once amused in Colin Glen by observing two of these birds for a long time advancing through the plantation and evidently considering themselves companions, though they were never nearer to each other than the stems of neighbouring trees. Each left its tree about the same moment to fly onwards to another, so that both were to be seen at one view, scanning the bark of a tree on either hand, beginning at the bottom and ascending in the usual manner.

Mr. R. Ball has "known the creeper to be captured by boys getting to the opposite side of a tree at the base of which it commenced feeding, and making a random stroke with a cap or hat, at the place they supposed it had reached in its upward movement." On the 4th of June, 1842, Mr. Thomas Garrett brought me a specimen of the creeper which he had just killed with a stone at Cultra, near Belfast. He remarked, that on being alarmed by a stone striking the tree near to it, the bird clings closely to the bark and remains motionless as if dead, not flying off until the hand is all but laid upon it. He, to-day, found a nest of young creepers at this locality, built in an old spout. In the stomach of the specimen, I found the remains of insects, and the husk of a pine seed, thus proving, that in summer,—and the weather has been remarkably fine and warm for some time,—vegetable food is taken. This species is generally stated by authors to

live entirely on insects; but the stomachs of the only two others I have examined, contained each, in addition to such food, a few seeds of the common pine (*Pinus sylvestris*): the latter specimens were shot in the month of January. Wilson, in his American Ornithology, mentions his having found the seeds of the pine-tree (of course a different species from *P. sylvestris*) in the stomachs of individuals killed in the United States, and likewise "fragments of a fungus that vegetates on old wood."

Like most other birds, this species is partial to building annually about the same place. In holes of the yard-wall at Castle Warren, a pair built successively for the last five years. The female was killed one season within that period, when she had a nest. The first nest and eggs of this year (1848) were taken away, and a short time afterwards, a second nest was erected in the wall about a foot higher up.* They were composed of dried grasses and lined with feathers.

Mr. Macgillivray gives a very full and graphic description of the creeper. Brit. Birds, vol. iii.

THE COMMON WREN.

Troglodytes Europæus, Cuv.
Motacilla troglodytes, Linn.
Sylvia „ Lath.

Prevails throughout the island;

And though chiefly known as an inhabitant of gardens, plantations and farm-yards, is found in summer and autumn far distant from such localities, in the wild heathy tracts both of the lowlands and mountain-tops. In similar places, it has been observed by a sporting friend, and subsequently by myself, in a fine grouse district in Inverness-shire, where the vicinity even of the dwelling-house is unfrequented either by the robin or the sparrow.

The nest is generally composed of moss, and placed in hedges,

*Mr. R. Warren, junr.

or in trees and shrubs of various kinds. Warmer sites are not unfrequently selected; once in a corn-stack, and four times within houses at our country place, nests of the wren were observed. One was placed on the wall-top, just under the roof of a coach-house. A swallow's nest of the preceding year, built inside a shed and against a rafter supporting a floor, was taken possession of by another pair, and fitted up with moss, a considerable quantity of which was introduced, though no attempt at a dome was made; indeed, for a proper construction of the kind there would not have been sufficient room. Nor did the third nest present any appearance of a dome; it was built in the hole of a wall inside a house, the only entrance being through a broken pane of the window. The fourth was constructed in a bunch of herbs hung up to a beam across the top of the garden-house for the purpose of being dried; almost the entire nest was formed of the herbs, and the bunch altogether was very little larger than the nest itself; the door of this house was generally kept locked, the only mode of entrance at such times being beneath it, where there was barely room for the birds to pass through:—in all these instances the broods were reared in safety. About Whitehouse, on the shore of Belfast bay, where the grass-wrack (*Zostera marina*) is abundant, and always lying in masses on the beach, I am informed that this material is commonly used by the wren in the construction of its nest, which externally is entirely composed of it. An observant friend agrees with Mr. Hewitson, that the nest is most frequently lined with some feathers, though not thickly. He has found upwards of a dozen of eggs in one, and notices, from his own observation, the well-known circumstance of its making two or three nests before laying:—fourteen eggs have been reckoned in nests, by two of my correspondents.* A gentleman of my acquaintance was once much amused by witnessing a wren purloining materials from a thrush's nest, which was built in a bush adjoining its own tenement, then in course of erection. When the thrush was ab-

* Mr. Hewitson remarks:—"Notwithstanding the number of eggs which the wren has been said to lay, I have never succeeded in finding more than eight, and rarely more than seven, in the same nest." Eggs, Brit. Birds, p. 200.

sent in search of food for its young, which were nearly fledged, the wren generally contrived to steal from it "two or three good mouthfuls" to assist in the erection of its own edifice. This species will sometimes, but not always, desert its nest and eggs, if the latter have been but once handled. The food contained in the stomachs of two wrens examined in January, was entirely insects; in the one, consisting of minute *Coleoptera* only.

Mr. R. Davis, junr., of Clonmel, communicated the following note in Nov., 1841:—"Being some years ago in want of the eggs of the spotted flycatcher, I had been watching a pair which had built in a garden near our house. The female had laid three eggs, and on my going two days afterwards, hoping to find the full number, five, my surprise may be imagined, when instead of them, the nest was found crammed with young wrens just able to fly! they had apparently broken or thrown out all the eggs but one: the flycatchers were gone. I suppose the wrens, being 'brought out' for the first time, had taken refuge in the nest and expelled the rightful owners; but it was rather a curious and inexplicable circumstance."

I have often in winter seen the wren in a well-sheltered locality frequenting the cow-shed and farm-stable in the forenoon of frosty days, when there was bright and warm sunshine out of doors. It nightly roosted in the former, which was the warmest place that could be found. This bird often resorts to the green-houses and hot-houses in the garden of a relative, especially in winter. My friend Wm. Ogilby, Esq., supplies the following note on this subject:—"These little birds associate in small families of from four or five to a dozen or more, and take refuge in holes, or under the eaves of thatched houses, during the severity of winter nights. I have often, when a boy, watched the little party thus taking up their lodging for the night, and have on more than one occasion captured and drawn them from their retreat. They make a prodigious chattering and bustle before finally settling for the night, as if contending which shall get into the warmest and most comfortable place, and frequently come to the mouth of the hole to see that they are unobserved. I presume that these little parties

are composed of the nestlings of the previous year, with perhaps the parent birds; but I have no proof of the fact beyond its probability. If such be the case, however, it would show that the bond of social union between the parent birds and their young continues unbroken during the year, and is severed only when the new season prompts the young brood to become parents in their turn."

On the yard-wall before my window in the country a wren once appeared, on the 23rd of September, singing with such extraordinary loudness, as immediately to attract other birds to the spot. First came a hedge-sparrow to buffet it, followed by a male and female chaffinch, also with sinister intent; but bold as Fitz James,

> "Come one, come all, this *wall* shall fly
> From its firm base as soon as I,"

it maintained its position against them all, and sang away as fiercely as ever, its wings and tail drooping all the time. A robin too alighted beside the songster, but, unlike the others, did not seek to disturb it. For this strange proceeding on the part of the wren there was no apparent cause. The uproar this species keeps by the loud utterance and repetition of its call *chit*,* when a cat appears in its vicinity is well known, and is of service to other birds by warning them of the presence of their enemy.

Smith, in his History of Cork, written about a century ago, remarks,—"as the wren makes but short flights, and when driven from the hedges is easily run down, to hunt and kill him is an ancient custom of the Irish on St. Stephen's day." Mr. R. Ball considers that "this persecution of the bird in the south is falling into disuse, like other superstitious ceremonies."† "To hunt the wren is a favourite pastime of the peasantry of Kerry, on Christmas day. This they do, each using two sticks, one to beat the bushes, the other to fling at the bird. It was the boast of an old

* Hence popularly called 'chitty wren' in Ireland. Jenny wren is another popular name.

† This gentleman remarks, that the hedge-sparrow (*Accentor modularis*) is called *wren's-man* in the south of Ireland, and that it often falls a sacrifice to the hunters of the wren.

man who lately died at the age of 100, that he had hunted the wren for the last 80 years on Christmas day. On St. Stephen's day, the children exhibit the slaughtered birds on an ivy-bush decked with ribbons of various colours, and carry them about singing the well-known song commencing

'The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,' &c.

and thus collect money."* In Dr. Wm. H. Drummond's Rights of Animals, the cruelty practised towards the wren in the south of Ireland (in the north the practice is unknown) is dwelt upon, and a tradition narrated, attributing its origin to political motives. In the first number of Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall's Ireland, a very full and well-told account of the "hunting of the wren" appears.†

* Mr. T. F. Neligan, 1837.

† "As to the origin of the whimsical, but absurd and cruel custom [of hunting the wren] we have no data. A legend, however, is still current among the peasantry which may serve in some degree to elucidate it.

"In a grand assembly of all the birds of the air, it was determined that the sovereignty of the feathered tribe, should be conferred upon the one who would fly highest. The favourite in the betting-book was of course the eagle, who at once, and in full confidence of victory, commenced his flight towards the sun; when he had vastly distanced all competitors, he proclaimed with a mighty voice his monarchy over all things that had wings. Suddenly, however, the wren who had secreted himself under the feathers of the eagle's crest, popped from his hiding-place, flew a few inches upwards, and chirped out as loudly as he could: 'Birds, look up and behold your king!'

"There is also a tradition that in 'ould ancient times,' when the native Irish were about to catch their Danish enemies asleep, a wren perched upon the drum and woke the slumbering sentinels just in time to save the whole army; in consequence of which, the little bird was proclaimed a traitor, outlawed, and his life declared forfeit whenever he was henceforward encountered."—Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall's Ireland, vol. i. p. 25.

The lines according to the same work, are:—

"The wran, the wran, the king of all birds,
St. Stephen's day was cot in the furze;
Although he is little, his family's grate,
Put your hand in your pocket, and give us a trate.
Sing holly, sing ivy,—sing ivy, sing holly,
A drop just to drink, it would drown melancholy.
And if you dhraw it ov the best,
I hope in heaven yer sowl will rest,
But if you dhraw it ov the small,
It wont agree wid de wran boys at all."—p. 24.

The subject has even been dramatised, or at least, selected for the title of a drama. It was lately (Sept. 1848) posted on the walls of Belfast, as about to be performed at "one of the minor theatres." Having a desire to see the nature of the piece, the manager's copy was kindly placed at my service. The title is "The Wren Boys: or the Moment of Peril; an original drama, in two acts. By Thomas Egerton Wilks, Esq. * * * Author of —— &c., &c. As performed at the London Theatres."

The legend there given as "current among the peasantry," is not however confined to them, for Mr. Macgillivray, apparently without knowing anything of the Irish fable, relates the same as told

In Act. 2. Scene 1., is the village of Shanagolden, in Munster. The wren boys enter confusedly, one bearing a bush with a wren in it, and the first four lines nearly as above given, are sung, followed by the chorus. The wren boys are occasionally introduced afterwards, wanting "money and liquor." They bear but a subordinate part in the "romantic drama." It was printed and published in London.

The wren boys remind one of the swallow boys at Rhodes, whose song had better be given here with some prefatory matter:—

"The household swallow was interwoven with the legendary history of Athens, by the tragic poets of the Attic stage. The nightingale and the swallow were both of them birds of passage. The children in Rhodes greeted the latter as herald of the spring in a little song. Troops of them carrying about a swallow, sang this from door to door, and collected provisions in return:—

"The Swallow is come!
The Swallow is come!
O fair are the seasons, and light
Are the days that she brings
With her dusky wings,
And her bosom snowy white.—
And wilt thou not dole
From the wealth that is thine,
The fig, and the bowl
Of rosy wine,
And the wheaten meal, and the basket of cheese,
And the omelet cake, which is known to please
The Swallow, that comes to the Rhodian land?
Say: Must we be gone with an empty hand,
Or shall we receive
The gift that we crave?
If thou give,—it is well.
But beware, if thou fail,
Nor hope that we'll leave thee:
Of all we'll bereave thee.
We'll bear off the door,
Or its posts from the floor,—
Or we'll seize thy young wife who is sitting within,
Whose form is so airy, so light, and so thin,
And as lightly, be sure, will we bear her away.
Then look that thy gift be ample to-day;
And open the door, open the door,
To the Swallow open the door!
No greybeards are we
To be foiled in our glee,
But boys who will have our will
This day,
But boys, who will have our will." *

Hase's Public and Private Life of the Ancient Greeks, p. 23–25.

"A tradition is prevalent in some parts both of the north and south of Ireland, that on one occasion James the 2nd's forces were on the point of surprising King

* Athenæus, viii., c. 60.

by the inhabitants of the Hebrides (Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 19); and a detailed account of the wren being called a "king-bird," over a considerable part of the European continent, will be found in one of the volumes of the Library of Entertaining Knowledge, entitled the Habits of Birds, p. 49. In the Literary Gazette of February the 28th, 1846, p. 195, is a letter, occupying a column, on the subject of both the wren and regulus, being called king-birds. It was suggested by a communication which Mr. C. Croker made to the British Archæological Association, on the 4th of that month, as reported in the Lit. Gaz. of the 7th (p. 131). A great deal of information on the hunting of the wren, as well as on that species and the regulus being called king-birds in various countries, is given. It is stated, that in the Isle of Man, Wales, and the south of France, the hunting of the wren is practised at Christmas. Mr. Croker noticed the subject in connection with a proclamation by Richard Dowden, Mayor of Cork, issued at the close of 1845, with the intention, as headed, to "prevent cruelty to animals." "The old popular ceremony long prevalent in Ireland, of hunting and killing a wren on St. Stephen's day," was forbidden.

Much the fullest description of the wren I have met with, is from the pen of Mr. Weir, and published in Mr. Macgillivray's work just mentioned. In Holland, Switzerland, and Italy, I have met with the wren as commonly as in the British Islands.

William's army early in the morning, when some *wrens*, attracted probably by the fragments of the preceding night's meal, alighted on the head of a drum which had served for a table, and the noise of their bills in the act of picking awoke the drummer, who instantly beat to arms, and saved William's army from defeat. The wren accordingly, has been ever since a prime favourite with the Orange party, and an object of persecution to the friends of James."—Extract from a small work entitled The Rights of Animals, by Wm. H. Drummond, D. D., p. 142. (1838.)

THE HOOPOE.

Upupa Epops, Linn.

Has occasionally appeared in all quarters of the island.

Considering the western position of Ireland, this is more than we should expect from what is said of its occurrence in Scotland. We are told that it has been met with in several districts there "even as far north as Caithness and Orkney, although not on the western coast beyond the Frith of Clyde." * North and South Wales, and about one half of the English counties are named by Mr. Yarrell as having been visited by the hoopoe, and its occurrence is mentioned as most frequent in those of the east and south. The southern counties of Ireland,—Wexford, Waterford, and Cork,—are, as might be anticipated, the most frequently visited by this remarkable and beautiful species; but, it has occasionally wandered to the most western, as Kerry, Limerick, Clare, and Galway. In no instance has the hoopoe been known to breed in this island, as it has done on two or three occasions in England. Full details respecting the times and places of its occurrence must be given.

Smith, in his History of Waterford, published in 1745, remarks of this bird :—"I never heard of above one being seen in this country; this was shot upon the ruins of the old church of Stradbally, during the great frost of 1739, and was long in the possession of Mr. Maurice Uniacke, of Woodhouse." The same author, in his History of the county of Cork, observes, that "the hoopoe is with us a very rare bird," but gives no particulars of its occurrence. In M'Skimmin's History of Carrickfergus, it is related, that "one was shot on the shore near the the town, Sept. 21, 1809;" and Mr. Templeton records another, as obtained there in 1818. The following information respecting the hoopoe has been obtained since my own attention was first directed to the subject :—

* Macgillivray, British Birds, vol. iii. p. 43 (1840).

Year.	Month or Season.	No.	Locality.	Observations.
1819?	,,	1	Shot at Cloverhill near the town of Roscommon.	Mr. R. Ball, during the many years of his residence at Youghal (co. Cork), saw five of these birds, and heard of others which were procured in the neighbourhood.
1823?	Feb.	1	,, Near Ballynahinch (Down).	In fine adult plumage.
1828	,,	1	Killed at Balbriggan (Dublin).	
,,	,,	1	,, Lord Llandaff's (Tipperary).	
1833?	,,	1	,, Cape Clear.	
1833	Sept. 19th.	1	,, Kirkcubbin (Down).	A female.
1834	Feb. or March.	1	,, Kilbarry, near Waterford.	
,,	March.	1	Seen in King's county.	By Dr. Farran from the top of a coach. It was picking at horse-dung on the road when first observed; and flew before the vehicle for about five hundred yards.
,,	Oct. 6th.*	1	Shot at Banbridge (co. Down).	Its weight 3oz. 1dr.; contents of stomach, caterpillars, and other insect food. (Dr. J. D. Marshall.)
,,	Winter of	2	Seen at Killinick (Wexford).	Remained during the winter, and though much pursued, too wary to be shot. (Major Thomas Walker.)
1835	September (early in)	1	Shot near Coleraine (Londonderry).	
,,	Sept. 26th.	1	,, Killaloe (Clare).	Caterpillars and a beetle found in its stomach (Rev. Thomas Knox).
1837	Sept. 21st.	1	,, Galway.	A male bird; its stomach filled with the remains of beetles (*Coleoptera*);—Dr. Farran.
,,	Oct. 20th.	1	,, Galway.	

* A hoopoe flew on board the Shannon steam-packet when on the passage from London to Dublin, in September, 1834; it was seen by my informant on the arrival of the vessel at the latter port, on the 20th of that month.

Year.	Month or Season.	No.	Locality.	Observations.
1838	April 1st.	1	Shot in the county of Kilkenny.	
,,	September (early in)	1	Seen at Fairymount, O'Brien's Bridge.	Pursued by magpies. It was found dead a day or two afterwards in the neighbourhood, having, it was thought, been killed by its pursuers. (Limerick Chronicle.)
,,	Oct. (early in)	1	Shot near Londonderry.	
1839	March.	1	,, Kilbarry, Waterford.	At Tramore and Woodstown, in the same county, the hoopoe has been met with on a few occasions. (Dr. R. J. Burkitt.)
1840	Oct. (end of)	1	,, Cork.	
1841	Autumn of	1	,, In the county of Westmeath.	
,,	,,	1	,, Wexford.	
,,	Oct. 17th.	1	,, At Saunder's-court, near Wexford.	A locality in which the species has occurred several times.
1842	,,	1	,, Near Cork.	
,,	Autumn.	1	,, ,, Waterford.	
,,	Oct. (middle of)	1	,, ,, Wexford.	The shooter had the opportunity of observing that the crest is borne erect during flight.
1843	March ?	1	,, ,, ,,	About the same time one in an exhausted state, flew on board a vessel in Wexford harbour. (Mr. J. Poole.)
1845	May (middle of)	2	,, In the Queen's county (?)	Sent to Dublin to be preserved; they were male and female.
,,	July 2nd.	1	,, Near Cork.	
1847	March. (middle of)	2	,, In the county of Wexford.	
,,	,,	2	,, In the county of Waterford.	
,,	March 22d.	1	,, Near Portaferry (Down).	An adult male. In its stomach I found some minute coleoptera and vegetable matter.
		1	,, Killarney (Kerry) some years ago.	

From the preceding notes it appears that the hoopoe has visited Ireland in six successive years—from 1837 to 1842 inclusive;—in 1836 there is no record; but this may have arisen from mere omission: in 1833, 1834 and 1835, it was obtained.

All of these birds, except two or three, said to have been met with in summer and in winter, were evidently on migration, a few in spring, and the greater number in autumn;—September and October. The hoopoe generally appears singly. It is remarkable that individuals should frequently wander so far west of the direct line of their migration as this island, either when moving towards the north of Europe for the summer, or towards Africa for the winter.

On the 24th and 25th of April, 1841, two or three of these birds alighted, each day, on H.M.S. Beacon, when on the passage from Malta to the Morea, and 50 to 130 miles eastward of Sicily: they rested but for a short time, then proceeded on their northward flight.* When travelling from Aix-la-Chapelle to Liège, on the 17th of July, I was gratified with the sight of a hoopoe, which alighted on the road before the carriage.

THE CUCKOO.
Gowk.

Cuculus canorus, Linn.

Is well known throughout Ireland as a regular spring visitant.

It has been remarked with respect to Scotland, by Sir. Wm. Jardine and Mr. Macgillivray, that localities of almost every character are visited by this bird. It is likewise so in Ireland. The wild and treeless wastes on different portions of the western coast attract it equally with the most highly cultivated and best wooded districts. Mr. R. Ball remarked, when visiting the largest of the south islands of Arran, off Galway bay, accompanied by the late lamented Dean of St. Patrick's, in June, 1835, that cuckoos were particularly abundant there. This island is altogether destitute of trees, except at one spot, where some half-dozen appear; its whole surface is either rocky or covered with a

* M. Duval-Jouve remarks, in the Zoologist for October, 1845, that—"this beautiful species passes (through Provence) in April, and early in May; and in September: it crosses the (Mediterranean) sea direct in both its passages." p. 1123.

short rich pasture. Along the romantic coast of Antrim, about Glenarm and Carnlough, the peasantry look forward with the greatest interest every spring, for what they call the "*Gowk* (cuckoo) *Storm*," that takes place about the end of April, or the beginning of May, when the note of this bird is heard. This storm, which is from the east, casts on the beach vast quantities of sea-wrack, used as manure for their potatoes. When staying in that quarter at the latter end of May, 1842, I was informed, that this was the only year in which a strong east wind had not thrown ashore abundance of the wrack. The season was so far advanced, that the people could wait no longer, and they were busily engaged in boats, containing from one to three men each, cutting it from the submerged rocks. This was done very dexterously with a small sharp hook fixed at the end of a long pole, the plant being cut and brought into the boat at the one sweep. The tangle (*Laminaria digitata*) is the species chiefly used. I saw potatoes planted on it a few hours after its being cut from the rocks. It is carried in sacks by men up the steep but arable sides of the glens, where horses cannot be used. A sufficient quantity could not be obtained in the manner described, and it was consequently feared, that much of the ground intended for potatoes would lie fallow during that summer for want of the gowk storm. In Tory island, off the north of Donegal, said to be visited by the cuckoo about once in seven years, its presence is imagined to be a good omen for the crops.*

The vernal appearance of the cuckoo in the north of Ireland, is as early as some authors report it to be in the south of England. My notes bear witness to its arrival in the neighbourhood of Belfast, in seven consecutive years—from 1832 to 1838 inclusive: on April 16th, 20th, 21st, 10th, 22nd, 26th, 30th,—and on the 23rd in 1840 and 1842.† The adult birds generally leave the north of the island at the end of June: on the 1st of July, 1832, I saw two, and heard their call, near Dunfanaghy, in the north-

* Mr. Hyndman.

† Dr. Scouler informs me, that he heard the call of the cuckoo at Coimbra, in Portugal, on the 21st of March, 1845. In that year, it was heard about Belfast, on the 18th of April:—in the three following years, respectively, on the 13th; 30th; and 29th.

west of the county of Donegal. The stay of the cuckoo was remarkably prolonged in 1838,—in which year the period of their arrival was also later than ever known. One was heard calling at "The Falls" near Belfast, on the 7th of July.* The young birds of the year generally remain till towards the end of August; so late as the 27th of which month they have been observed in the county of Antrim. The Bishop of Norwich, in his Familiar History of Birds, records an instance of about forty cuckoos being congregated in a garden in the county of Down, from the 18th to the 22nd of July, and with the exception of one or two, which were smaller than the rest, taking their departure at that time. It is not stated whether they were adult or immature birds, and the time mentioned is between the periods of departure of the old and young; but from one or two remarks made, we may infer, that they were the latter. On the 5th of October a few years since, two young cuckoos were shot in a garden near Tralee; they were both in high condition.† An adult bird was shot at the migratory period a few years ago when flying singly in a southerly direction over the sea, about two miles off Dundrum, county Down.

The singular economy of the cuckoo in depositing its eggs in the nests of other birds, has been very fully treated of, from personal observation, by the celebrated Dr. Jenner,‡ Mr. Blackwall,§ Mr. Weir,‖ and others. I have not anything novel to offer on the subject, but will introduce a few observations made in Ireland. In the north of the island,¶ as in Scotland,** the nest of the tit-

* In M'Skimmin's History of Carrickfergus (1823), it is remarked, that—"During 20 years' observation, the earliest it has been heard calling, was the 17th of April, and the latest, the 30th of June."

† Mr. R. Chute. ‡ Philosophical Transactions, vol. lxxviii. § Researches in Zoology.

‖ Macgillivray's British Birds, vol. iii.

¶ Mr. Poole writing from the county of Wexford, mentions the titlark's nest as the usual receptacle of the cuckoo's egg there. Mr. R. Warren, junr., has seen the young cuckoo in the nest of the hedge-accentor, at Monkstown, near Cork. When at the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, on the 8th of June, 1844, a young cuckoo was pointed out to me in a robin's nest, by Mr. W. J. Smith, the curator, who mentioned, that this bird generally builds here on the ground, as in the present instance. We had circumstantial evidence of the nest being the property of a bird of this species, as a robin with a worm in its bill kept anxiously watching our movements in its vicinity.

** Jardine; Macgillivray.

lark (*Anthus pratensis*) seems generally to be the receptacle of the cuckoo's egg. George Ensor, Esq., of Ardress, county of Armagh, in a communication to the Magazine of Natural History (vol. vi. p. 83), mentions a tenant's son having taken home a young cuckoo from a titlark's nest. "Two wrens who had a nest with eight eggs in the eaves, and just above the window fronting the cage in which the cuckoo was placed, made their way through a broken pane, and continued to feed it for some time." The cuckoo was at length taken away, when "the wrens repaired to their own nest, and brought out the eggs that had been laid:"—we are not informed how long they were absent from it. At Rockport, near Belfast, a lady remarked, that when the cuckoo had attained such a size that its foster-parents could not reach up food, they alighted on its back to feed it. This proceeding was repeatedly observed from the windows of the house, near to which the nest was situated. The cuckoo is occasionally heard to call through the night, when fine, though there may be no moonlight. On the 8th of May, a dark morning, I noted that its call commenced at half-past three o'clock. It was once heard at the Falls on the 16th of June, at a quarter past two o'clock in the morning.

In April, 1834, I made the following communication to the Zoological Society of London:—

"May 28th, 1833.—On examination to-day of three cuckoos, which were killed in the counties of Tyrone and Antrim within the last week, I found them all to be in different stages of plumage. One was mature;—another (a female) exhibited on the sides of the neck and breast the reddish-coloured markings of the young bird, the remainder of the plumage being that of maturity;—the third specimen had reddish markings disposed entirely over it, much resembling the plumage described by M. Temminck as assumed by 'les jeunes tels qu'ils émigrent en automne' (vol. i. p. 383), but having a greater proportion of red, especially on the tail-coverts, than is specified in his description of the bird at that age. This individual proved on dissection to be a female, and did not contain any eggs so large as ordinary-sized peas. The stomach,

with the exception of the presence of some small sharp gravel, was entirely empty, and was closely coated over with hair.

"Attention was called to this, that the hair lining that organ might be observed. From its close adhesion to the inner surface of this stomach, and from the regularity with which it is arranged, I was at first disposed to consider this hair as being of spontaneous growth; but part of the stomach having been subjected to maceration in water, and afterwards viewed through a microscope of high power, the hairs proved, to the entire satisfaction of Mr. [now Professor] Owen and myself, to be altogether borrowed from the larvæ of the tiger-moth, *Arctia Caja*, Schrank, the only species found in the stomachs of several cuckoos * from different parts of the north of Ireland, which I examined in the months of May and June, 1833." Proceedings Zool. Soc., 1834, p. 29.

An observant friend found the remains of coleopterous insects in the stomach of a cuckoo, but does not remember whether this was at a time when its favourite caterpillars are to be procured. Mr. Poole remarks, that a young cuckoo which he shot on the 21st of July, "frequented a newly cut meadow, where it was busily occupied looking for food among the swathes. Its stomach was distended with caterpillars, together with some fibrous substance, like fine grass-stalks, some four inches long, and in considerable quantity." An intelligent bird-preserver has remarked a kind of tough gelatinous fat attached to the skin of the neck in the cuckoo, which he has not seen in any other bird.

I have several times known young cuckoos to have been kept for some months in good health, until winter fairly set in, when with two exceptions, they died.† Of the survivors, one lived for

* The stomachs of all these were coated with hair like the one described.

† Mr. Jas. R. Garrett has favoured me with the following note respecting one obtained since the preceding was written:—

"Belfast, Nov. 23rd, 1848.

"I have at present in confinement a young cuckoo, which I took, on the 21st of June, from the nest of a titlark. It was then in the plumage represented in the vignette in vol. ii. p. 199 of Yarrell's Brit. Birds (2nd Ed.), with the exception that its wing and tail-feathers were much longer. The titlarks were hovering about the nest when I approached, and close to it I found one of their eggs, containing a half-formed young bird in a state of decomposition. For several weeks after the cuckoo was placed in

more than a year at Cranmore, near Belfast, the residence of that well-known naturalist, John Templeton, Esq. But it will suffice to give the particulars respecting another, kept for a longer period, at the same place, and of which the following account, greatly exceeding in interest any I have read, appears in the MS. journal of Mr. Templeton :—

"January 10th, 1822.—Last night the cuckoo which E—— got on the 26th of July, 1820, died in consequence of C—— having hurt it with her foot on Tuesday last [8th]. Thus ended the days of this innocent little bird, whose engaging manners were the delight of the whole family and the admiration of strangers. It was fed generally on hard boiled eggs, and occasionally with caterpillars : it would sometimes eat forty or fifty at a time of those of the *Papilio brassicæ*; it, however, showed a decided preference for rough ones, as those of the *Papilio urticæ*. A seeming treat was a little mouse, about one quarter grown, which it would hold in its bill and beat against the ground, or anything hard, until the animal became soft, when it exhibited great powers of extending its throat and swallowing. What, however, was most extraordinary, it was never known to take a drink; though when presented with a drop of water at the end of a finger or straw, it would sip it, and seemed to delight, when seated on its mistress's or other person's hand, to put its bill to their mouths and sip saliva. It delighted very much in heat, and sitting in the sunshine; and as its feathers were so much broken by its striking

confinement, it uttered, when in want of food, a note so closely resembling that of the titlark, that it would have been almost impossible to distinguish between them. By degrees, however, its voice became more harsh, and latterly its only call has been a discordant one, uttered in the evening, and but once daily. This is very like the bark of a dog, repeated four or five times in quick succession. Whether all young cuckoos have, in the first instance, the same note, or whether they acquire, for a time, that of the foster parents, (whatever it may happen to be,) I have been unable to ascertain; but the present case seems to support the latter supposition. For some weeks the cuckoo's food (consisting of the yelk of hard boiled eggs, worms, or chopped flesh-meat,) was placed in its beak, but it has learned to feed out of a cup placed in the cage. The worms are invariably passed several times through its bill in the peculiar manner described by Montagu previous to being swallowed. It prefers caterpillars in the season to any other species of food, and seldom swallows anything without bruising it for some time in its beak. No fluid of any kind has been given to this bird. The irides are hazel, not *blue*, as stated by Bewick in reference to the young of this species." A few hours after the preceding was written, the subject of it was found dead in its cage.

them against the furniture that it could fly but very imperfectly, it was apparently very thankful to any person who would help it up on the first sash of the window. At other times it sat upon the fender, turning itself in various directions, and spreading its wings and feathers to receive the heat, of which it could bear a temperature equal to 100 degrees for a considerable time with seeming satisfaction. During cold weather it slept at its mistress's bed-side, covered with a piece of flannel, which was well warmed previous to its going to rest. With this attention, it generally remained quiescent until morning; but on feeling cold, sometimes presumed so far as to creep under the bed-clothes. It was only to those from whom it had received some hurt or persecution, that it expressed dislike or fear, which it manifested by raising its neck-feathers and putting itself into an attitude of defence. It never uttered the cry of the male—'cuckoo'—but sometimes, when persons in the room were laughing, it would apparently join, and emit a noise somewhat like the barking of a little dog. At all other times the only sound it made was a kind of low chattering, expressive of pleasure, when it got into a warm place, or on seeing its mistress after she had been absent for some hours. It received the unlucky tramp, which finally killed it, by having lost too much the apprehension of injury."

From Miss Templeton, I have learned the following particulars respecting this cuckoo:—It moulted only a few feathers the first year about Christmas; the following year, about the same period, moulting commenced, and the bird became so unwell, that its life was considered to be in danger. Some of the adult plumage was then exhibited, but before there was time for this to be perfected, the poor bird met with its accidental death. This cuckoo was never subjected to the confinement of the cage, but was kept in the parlour through the day, and taken to its mistress's bed-room at night. Its favourite food was a hairy species of caterpillar found upon the oak, that being better liked than the hispid one of the nettle butterfly; but it would eat voraciously of either of these, consuming fully three times as many, as of the smooth caterpillar of the cabbage:—this was wholly rejected when the

others were to be had. Every caterpillar was viscerated by the bird previous to being swallowed, as were the mice also when young enough for this process: the latter were always swallowed head foremost, and for a considerable time afterwards, their tails appeared dangling from the cuckoo's bill. When the season was too far advanced for caterpillars to be procured, this bird was fed on raw flesh-meat, and seemed to gain much strength in consequence: with this, and hard-boiled eggs, it was supplied throughout the winter. It never consumed less in a day than a couple of eggs, in addition to a little of some other food. It is described as having been apparently deficient in the power of picking up little fragments of anything, as bits of egg, &c. To the last, it gaped to be fed with all but caterpillars,—its natural food. Being remarkably sharp-sighted, it would perceive from the opposite side of the room, if a caterpillar had escaped, and with the utmost rapidity dart at and seize the prey. This bird was, from its note, presumed to be a female: it was originally taken from a titlark's nest. Montagu, in the supplement to his Ornithological Dictionary, gives so full and interesting an account of a cuckoo which he kept, that a portion of the above is but a counterpart of his narrative. It seemed to me, however, that all particulars respecting Mr. Templeton's bird, were well worthy of being recorded.

In Holland, I have heard the call of the cuckoo, in the king's park at the Hague, towards the end of May, and in Switzerland, late in June. Its well-known cry was most gratifying to my ear, when (on the 16th of May) riding over the bare wild hills and through the forest between Constantinople and the picturesque village of Belgrade,—once the residence of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. In the vicinity of Navarino, on the 28th of April, a small flock of seven or eight birds, which were believed to be cuckoos, flew near to me, proceeding in a northerly direction, but the call was wanting to prove the species. This bird occasionally utters the note "cu-cu" sharply several times successively, which I have particularly remarked when two or three are in company.

THE GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO.

Cuculus glandarius, Linn.

Has once been obtained.

A LETTER from A. Crighton, Esq., of Clifden, Connemara, to Mr. R. Ball, gives the following information respecting it:—

"The cuckoo, pursued by hawks, was taken by two persons, walking on the island of Omagh. It flew into a hole in a stone fence or wall, was caught alive, and lived for four days on potatoes and water. The inhabitants of this country had never seen any bird like it before, and as they are constantly in the habit of fishing at Bofin and Arran Islands, if the bird were to be met with, no doubt they would have recognised it. The bird when chased by the hawks, appeared fatigued, weak, and emaciated, as though it had taken a long flight, as woodcocks and other birds of passage do on first arrival." The month of March, 1842, is said to have been the time of its capture. On being sent to Dublin to be preserved, an excellent coloured drawing of it, the size of life, was kindly made by Miss Battersby, and forwarded for my acceptance: the plumage represented agrees best with that of the adult bird, as described by Temminck. The specimen has subsequently been obtained by Mr. Ball for the museum of Trinity College, Dublin. It is the only one known to have visited the British Islands.

According to Temminck (part 3, p. 277), the northern parts of Africa seem to be the chief abode of this bird, which occasionally visits southern Europe—Spain, France (south of), Italy, &c. In Germany also, it has been met with in different instances.

"Mr. Gould, in his well-known work on the Birds of Europe, says, that the true habitat of this species is the wooded districts, skirting the sultry plains of North Africa, but those that pass the Mediterranean, find a congenial climate in Spain and Italy. Opportunities are still wanting to confirm the most interesting of its habits." *

* Yarrell, British Birds, vol. ii. p. 202. (2nd edit.)

THE YELLOW-BILLED AMERICAN CUCKOO.

Coccyzus Americanus, Linn. (sp.)
Cuculus ,, ,,
——— *cinerosus*, Temm.*

Has twice been procured in Ireland.

The first notice of the occurrence of this species in the British Islands, and indeed in the Eastern hemisphere, is due to Mr. R. Ball of Dublin, who contributed a note upon the subject to the first number of the Field Naturalist's Magazine. He states, that when at Youghal (co. Cork) in 1825, the butler of a neighbouring gentleman brought him a specimen of this bird a few minutes after its being shot, and when still warm and bleeding. In the same communication, dated from Dublin Castle, October 20th, 1832, a second example is mentioned as having been recently killed near Bray, a few miles from Dublin. About the same period ("autumn, 1832") one was shot on the estate of Lord Cawdor, in Wales. Mr. Yarrell received a communication respecting the occurrence of another in Cornwall, but no date is given. (Br. Birds, vol. ii. p. 190.) These are, I believe, all the recorded instances of the species having been met with in the British Islands. Foreign ornithological works published down to 1845, do not contain any notice of its occurrence on the European continent.

The specimen obtained near Bray was shown to me by Mr. Glennon, bird-preserver, Dublin, and I agree with Mr. Ball in considering it identical in species with his own. This was entrusted to me when about to visit London in the spring of 1835, and on comparing it with the specimen presented by Lord Cawdor to the British Museum, I found them to be of the same species. Before leaving home, I had purchased in Belfast a yellow-billed American cuckoo from a person who shot it at Long Island (United States), and at a meeting of the Zoological Society

* See Temminck's Manuel, part 3, p. 277, for remarks both on the generic and specific names.

I exhibited this bird and Mr. Ball's for the purpose of showing their specific identity.*

It was considered desirable to look as critically as possible to these birds, on account of the singular fact of their appearance in this hemisphere. Some ornithologists can hardly believe that they crossed the Atlantic. Temminck conjectures that this cuckoo must breed in the north of Europe, whence the individuals migrated to the British Islands. But our knowledge of their occurrence here only in the more western parts (Ireland, Wales, and Cornwall), in addition to the fact, that at the very period of their being met with, the species, according to Wilson and Audubon, is in course of migration in the western hemisphere, seems to me presumptive evidence of their having really crossed the ocean. Audubon has seen this bird in summer so far north as Labrador. It winters in temperate climates.

THE ROLLER.

Coracias garrula, Linn.

Appears, on the following testimony, to have visited this island.

Mr. R. Ball, when walking through the demesne at Carton, the seat of the Duke of Leinster, in the middle of September, 1831, had his attention attracted by a bird, pursued by a great number of rooks. Instead of flying off to avoid them, it continued for a considerable time (so long as he remained) to dash into the midst of them, apparently for the sake only of annoyance. From the size, brilliant plumage, and singular flight of this bird, my friend was satisfied of its being a roller. Mr. Walker of Granby Row, Dublin, states that one of these birds, shot in the county of Sligo some years ago, was preserved for a relative of his who resides there. Another roller has been mentioned to me as obtained in the south of Ireland some years since; but as yet, no example of the bird unquestionably killed in this island, has to

* Proc. Zool. Soc. 1835, p. 84.

my knowledge come under the inspection of the naturalist. This species is a rare and occasional visitant to England and Scotland.

THE BEE-EATER.

Merops Apiaster, Linn.

Has very rarely been met with in Ireland.

Dr. J. D. Marshall of Belfast, in a communication to the Magazine of Natural History (vol. ii.), dated July, 1829, stated that one "was killed in the county of Wicklow a few years ago." Dr. R. Graves of Dublin, in a letter addressed to a mutual friend in Belfast, in November, 1830, mentioned, that he had known three bee-eaters to have been obtained in the interior of Ireland, one of which was shot by Mr. Tardy, the eminent entomologist; its stomach was found to contain many bees. It is doubtless the same individual which is alluded to by Mr. Vigors in the Zoological Journal (No. 4, p. 589) as being in the possession of that gentleman; but is there stated to have been shot "on the sea-coast, near Wexford, in the winter of 1820." (?)

I had the opportunity, as noticed in the Magazine of Natural History (vol. ii. p. 18, new series), of examining in a recent state, the only one of these birds yet recorded as obtained in Scotland. It was said to have been shot on the 6th of October, 1832, by Capt. James M'Dowall, 2nd Life Guards, at his seat near the Mull of Galloway. The specimen was sent to Belfast by my friend Capt. Fayrer, R.N., to be preserved, and set up for that gentleman. But few of these birds have been obtained in England.

I have had the gratification of seeing the bee-eater in scenes with which its brilliant plumage was more in harmony than with any in the British Isles. It first excited my admiration in August 1826, when visiting the celebrated grotto of Egeria, near Rome. On approaching this classic spot, several of these birds, in rapid, swift-like flight, swept closely past and around us, uttering their peculiar call, and with their graceful form and brilliant colours proved irresistibly attractive. My companion, who, as well as

myself, beheld them for the first time, was so greatly struck with the beauty of their plumage and bold sweeping flight, as to term them the presiding deities over Egeria's Grotto. Rich as was the spot in historical and poetical associations, it was not less so in pictorial charms; all was in admirable keeping:—the picturesque grotto with its ivy-mantled entrance and gushing spring; the gracefully reclining, though headless white marble statue of the nymph; the sides of the grotto covered with the exquisitely beautiful maiden-hair fern in the richest luxuriance; the wilderness of wild flowers around the exterior, attracting the bees, on which the *Merops* was feeding; and over all, the deep blue sky of Rome completing the picture.

On the 26th of April, 1841, three bee-eaters coming from the south flew close past H.M.S. Beacon, sailing from Malta to the Morea, but did not alight. We were then about 90 miles from Zante (the nearest land), and 130 from Navarino. On the morning of the next day, when 45 miles from Zante, and 60 west of the Morea, a bee-eater, coming from the south-west, alighted for a moment on the vessel and then flew towards Zante, in a north-east direction: soon afterwards, a flock consisting of fifteen came from the same quarter, hawked about the lee side of the vessel for a short time, and then proceeded north-east; an hour after their departure (ten o'clock), a flock of eight appeared, and alighting on a rope astern the ship, remained there for nearly an hour; they were perched so close together, and so low down on the rope, that by its motion the lowest one was more than once ducked in the water, but nevertheless did not let go its hold, or change the position for a drier one. These birds were but a few yards from the cabin-windows, and looked so extremely beautiful, that they were compared, by some of the spectators, to paroquets, and not very inaptly on account of their gaudy plumage. After these left us, others were seen throughout the day, but generally singly; they rarely alighted; all flew in the same course.*

* When not very far to the westward of Cape Matapan, on the 1st of May, a flock of twenty-nine of the *Merops apiaster* flew close past the ship towards the Morea.

THE KINGFISHER.

Alcedo Ispida, Linn.

Is at least occasionally to be met with in suitable localities throughout the island.

It is nowhere numerous. As many individuals, however, would seem to be distributed over districts favourable for their abode in Ireland, as in any other country.

The kingfisher is generally said by British authors to be partial to clear streams, but to the correctness of this remark its haunts around Belfast will not bear testimony. Here are streams, which, though not on a grand scale, partake more or less of every natural character, and gently flow or wildly rush through scenery the most varied; yet the muddy, sluggish Lagan is its favourite haunt. About waters of every description it may be seen, not excepting the deep and unpicturesque brick-pits, near to which no tree or shrub appears.

There is decidedly a partial migration or movement of these birds. They came regularly every year about the same time in the month of August, to ponds at our own residence in the country, contiguous to the mountains, and elevated 500 feet above the sea. They remained generally for about six weeks, and once only were seen in winter. Their first appearance in the year 1831 was on the 4th of August; in 1833 on the 14th; in 1834 on the 14th; and in 1835 on the 17th of that month.* Although more frequently solitary, two were occasionally seen in company, and in one instance three, of which a couple were believed to be young birds, from being less brilliant in plumage, and more slow in flight than the other. Their usual haunts here are the willowed banks of ponds, one of which is not more than thirty yards distant from the dwelling-house. At little more than this distance we were once amused

* Intelligent persons resident on the banks of the Lagan, near Belfast, state, that kingfishers appear there in the autumn and remain until March, when they disappear. This accords with the observation of Mr. Weir, who, writing from Linlithgowshire, remarks,—"In my neighbourhood, kingfishers are never seen before the beginning of September, and they usually disappear about the end of March. They then retire to the river Avon, where they breed."—Macgillivray's Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 679.

by observing from the windows, a kingfisher perched on the handle of a spade, and looking a miserable object from its being "all droukit" with heavy rain. It did not betray any shyness, though several persons passed within about a dozen paces, but remained on this ungraceful perch * for not less than an hour, until driven away by the owner of the spade going to resume his work. This trivial circumstance is mentioned in connection with the chosen haunts of the kingfisher at this locality; some writers having described it as a wild and unapproachable bird, avoiding the vicinity of human dwellings. I have never found it so at any season. A relative, who has bestowed much attention on kingfishers, has been surprised by frequently observing them alight in beds of reeds growing on oozy banks beyond his reach, whence they could not again be raised either by his shouting or throwing stones. When much persecuted, as this bird generally is on account of its splendid plumage, it fortunately does become wild.

To my regret I was once guilty of the death of a kingfisher, but under extenuating circumstances. When in pursuit of woodcocks and snipes along the partially wooded banks of a rivulet, during frost which succeeded a heavy fall of snow, a small bird of a peculiar appearance was sprung two or three times as we advanced, and always within shot; at lastI fired, and to my astonishment, on going to the spot where the victim fell, found it to be a kingfisher. Sportsmen must have remarked the changed aspect of birds rising against a snowy background, but would hardly be prepared, as in this instance, to see a kingfisher lose all its brilliancy, and assume a hue, dark and sooty as the water-ouzel; yet such it did. Had the bird not appeared under false colours, the trigger would have been untouched. Its mode of flight should certainly have indicated the species; but over this, unfortunately, the negative character arising from the absence of its wonted beauty prevailed. Besides, it is not the snow-clad landscape that should bring to mind the kingfisher, whose vesture is more in accordance with the torrid zone than the arctic circle.

* I have seen the kingfisher perched on the not more picturesque brickbat, and on the mud of the river.

Mr. Yarrell observes that the kingfisher is "a difficult bird to shoot on the wing;" but from its usual flight being direct, like that of the water-ouzel and quail, I should call it easy:—this will, however, depend on the individual shooter. I sincerely hope that those who follow the bird with evil intent may find that it is "difficult" to be shot. Occasionally, both in summer and winter, I have seen a couple of kingfishers, apparently in playful mood, describing graceful curves after the manner of the sandpiper (*Totanus hypoleucos*), as they flew gently over the surface of the water. Their splendid plumage was at the same time displayed to the best advantage, and they gave forth their peculiar shrill piping call. This resembles the call of the sandpiper more than that of any bird with which I am acquainted, but may perhaps be termed louder, hoarser, and not so shrill. For several years successively, a pair of these birds were known to have their nest in holes in the banks of a rivulet at Seymour Hill, near Belfast; and at the Falls, an old pair with their four or five young have been seen perched on the same rail, not far distant from their nest.

This species has already been mentioned as resorting to an upland locality in the month of August, and remaining there through September; after which period and through the winter, it is to be met with about the streams and rivers of the lower grounds, and occasionally about the estuary of Belfast bay. A couple of them were remarked by my observant friend Mr. James R. Garrett, throughout the month of January, 1836, to frequent the river Lagan where subject to the flow of the tide; he has seen them, when on wing, plunge after their prey in the same manner as the gannet, and the tern. At the mouth of another river, where it enters the bay, three or four have been seen in company. At ebb-tide, this species has been observed fishing here in shallow pools of sea-water in its most picturesque manner,—suspended above the water, and darting down upon its prey. This mode must necessarily have been resorted to, as there was no branch of a tree or perch from which the bird could be on the look-out; but at rivers with wooded banks its prey is occasionally taken in the same manner. I remember being once entertained by observing

a kingfisher perched on a branch overhanging a pond, and about a foot above it, while trout, all too large for its mastery, kept leaping up immediately beneath as if in defiance of their enemy. From a branch fully six feet above the water, this bird has been observed to dart down upon its prey. A gentleman once informed me, that beside the nest of a kingfisher he had found the perfect skeleton of a fish which induced him to believe that the bird does not swallow the fish whole, but picks the flesh off. That such, however, is not the case, the stomachs of the few,—seven in number,—which I have myself examined, sufficiently attested, as they all contained fish-bones only. The two before alluded to, as frequenting the Lagan within flow of the tide in January, 1836, fell victims to the gun at the end of that month, and were found on dissection to have their stomachs filled with *Crustacea*; said to be "shrimps" about an inch in length. Mr. Poole remarks, that kingfishers perform a partial migration, probably from some inland district to the vicinity of the shore of Wexford harbour, where, during the winter months, they frequent small rills, &c. communicating with the sea at high tides; "multitudes of shrimps and small fry of fish are wintered here, and furnish their beautiful enemy with a readily obtained supply of food."

In the winter of 1830–31, a bird-preserver in Belfast received so many as seven kingfishers in the course of a month. Of these, three were shot at the Lagan,* one near Downpatrick, and two or three at the Six-mile Water, one of the tributaries of Lough Neagh. Within about a month on another occasion, from the middle of October to that of November, I saw seven of these birds which had been sent to taxidermists in Belfast. One of them was from the last-named river, and two others from the Inver, at Larne, and the Milewater, all county of Antrim streams; one from Killileagh (co. Down), and three from Coleraine (co. Londonderry). During a week in January, 1841, Mr. R. Davis, jun.,

* On the 21st of September, 1833, kingfishers were said to be plentiful about this river; four were seen together on a bank of gravel, and on being frightened away flew in company up the stream; about a mile below where they were first observed, my informant proceeding onwards saw two more: so many appearing within such a limited space, is extraordinary.

of Clonmel, received six of these birds; the extreme cold of that month will be remembered.* All these are remarkable cases.

My friend Richard Langtry, Esq., when grouse-shooting at Aberarder, in Inverness-shire, in the season of 1840, met with a kingfisher several times, from the middle to the end of September, about a wild mountain-rivulet at a considerable elevation, whose banks were destitute of wood or any cover. In the middle of August I once saw three of these birds in company at the Pontine marshes between Rome and Naples.

Mr. Waterton, in his Essays on Natural History, treats of the kingfisher in a most pleasing manner.

BELTED KINGFISHER.

Alcedo alcyon, Linn.

Two individuals of this species have been met with about the same period.

They were thus noticed in a communication which I made to the Annals of Natural History, for December, 1845. "I have the pleasure to record the occurrence of this North American bird in Ireland; a specimen (as I learn by letter from T. W. Warren, Esq., of Dublin, dated Nov. 21, 1845,) having been shot by Frederick A. Smith, Esq., at Annsbrook, county of Meath, on the 26th of October last. It has fortunately been preserved, and on being shown to Mr. R. Ball, was identified as *A. Alcyon*: this gentleman considers that the full strong plumage of the specimen denotes a truly wild bird, and not an individual that had escaped from confinement. According to the descriptions of Wilson and Richardson, it is a female, and not, at all events, in younger plumage, than that of the second year. Mr. Warren adds, that when at the shop of Mr. Glennon, the well-known bird-preserver, on the day before the date of his letter, the gamekeeper of Mr. Latouche of Luggela, county of Wicklow, called to mention that he had, within the last few days, seen a very large kingfisher, at a stream connecting the lake of Luggela with

* "In severe winters, they sometimes become so tame, that they even venture within a few feet of the door of Bathgate Mill, which is situated in the immediate vicinity of houses" Mr. Weir in Macgillvray's Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 679.

Lough Dan. He saw the bird very well, as it admitted of his approach within twenty yards: his description agreeing with the *A. Alcyon*, the specimen was shown to him, and he at once identified his bird as being of the same species. On his return to the country, he again met with and shot the bird, which proved to be *A. Alcyon*. It is now in the collection of Mr. Warren; the other was purchased for the museum of Trinity College, Dublin.

"This kingfisher, said to be the only species inhabiting North America, is migratory there, and like other birds which have visited Ireland and Great Britain from that continent, has appeared about the period of migration. As an American bird, it is fully treated of by Wilson,* Audubon,† and Richardson.‡ The last author states, that in summer 'it frequents all the large rivers in the fur countries up to the 67th degree of latitude.' It retires to winter in the Southern States, and the West India islands (Wilson and Richardson). Audubon remarks, that 'it is extremely hardy, and those individuals which migrate northward to breed, seldom return towards our Southern States, where they spend the winter, until absolutely forced to do so by the great severity of the weather,' vol. v. p. 548. This is, I believe, the first notice of the species being met with on the eastern side of the Atlantic."

THE COMMON SWALLOW.

Hirundo rustica, Linn.

Is abundant in summer; much more so than the other species of the family.

Arrival. It arrives the second in order, being preceded by the sand-martin. The earliest appearance of the swallow that I have known about Belfast, was in 1846, when on the 30th of March, two birds exhibiting the long tail-feathers which denote *H. rustica*, were seen flying over the bay. On the next day, a single bird was observed on each side of its shores. A large flock of brent-geese was in the bay; birds representing summer and winter being thus seen at the same time. The picturesque

* Sir W. Jardine's edit., vol. i. p. 348. † Orn. Biog. vols. i. and v.
‡ Fauna Bor. Amer. p. 339.

Cave-hill, also in view, displayed snow in its ravines, proving, as it were, that even *two* swallows do not make a summer. For ten days afterwards, one of these birds was observed to remain without a companion. On the 6th of April, a swallow was observed between Antrim and Ballymena. But, though individuals arrived so early that year, those which followed to complete the summer number, were remarkably late in coming. In the first week of April, they have been seen in other instances. The second week of that month is the ordinary period, and they may often be observed upon the tenth day.*

Although in the year 1836, the swallow was noticed in one locality near Belfast on the 15th or 16th of April, the species was generally late in arrival, and remarkably scarce. During a walk of upwards of two hours, on the morning of the 1st of May, through a well-wooded and cultivated district, where these birds usually abound at this season, I could not see one. On the 2nd of that month, when proceeding fourteen miles along the southern side of the bay, and returning the same distance, swallows appeared only at one place, where a few were in company. On the 3rd, 4th and 5th, not one was seen for miles along the banks of the river Lagan, a favourite resort. In 1837 also, they were very late in coming, and, as in the preceding summer, very scarce.† In the following year and subsequently they made their appearance as usual. The earliest observed by myself in 1838 were two, which on the 15th of April kept flying over the grassy margin of Belfast bay. It was a most unfavourable day for them, being excessively cold, with occasional heavy showers of snow, and blowing a hur-

* Newspaper paragraphs occasionally announce a very early arrival. In the Belfast Commercial Chronicle of April, 1835, it was stated that swallows had been seen about Larne on the 2nd of the month. The contributors of such notices, however, rarely discriminate between the different species of *Hirundo*, but apply the term swallow, generically, to the three species. The sand-martin may have been alluded to. On the 10th day of that month, I saw single swallows in two localities near Belfast.

† When travelling from Holyhead to Shrewsbury on the 12th of May, 1837, and on the following day thence to London, I perceived that swallows were everywhere very few in number. In Wales, one or two swifts only were observed. They appeared near Corwen, not one being seen at Llangollen, where I had remarked them to be particularly abundant in July, 1835. An excellent opportunity for observation was afforded from the outside of the coach.

ricane. As the in-coming tide flowed over the banks, the wind swept the spray (caught from the top of the small waves) before it, over the shallower portion of the bay, presenting the appearance of a dense hail-shower, careering for miles along the surface of the sea. In the summer of 1840 again, swallows were remarkably scarce in the north of Ireland. This was attributed by an observant friend to the inclement summer of the previous year having been unfavourable to their breeding,—it was considered that there were fewer young birds in 1839 than he had ever before known. On making a tour through the west of Ireland in the summer of 1840, I remarked that the *Hirundinidæ* generally, were very few in number. Although the month of April in 1842, was so remarkably fine and warm, swallows were a fortnight later than usual making their appearance in the north of Ireland. It is remarkable too, that from the first day of their arrival about Belfast until the 14th of May, or during three weeks, there was no apparent increase to their numbers. On the two following days, however, a sudden increase in all directions took place, and without any particular change in weather or wind. In 1843, the first was seen here on the 6th of April; in 1844, on the 9th; and in 1845, on the 5th of that month. In the north, the common swallow has continued to be very scarce for a number of years to the summer of 1845 inclusive, appearing otherwise in a few choice localities only, or when congregated for migration. In 1846, an increase was apparent; in 1847, a still greater one, though in some localities not one was yet to be seen; in 1848, not only an extraordinary augmentation took place, but everywhere for several miles around Belfast, swallows were as numerous during the summer and autumn as I ever saw them at any period.

Food. Dr. Jenner * states, that swallows on and for some time after their arrival, feed principally on gnats, but that their more favourite food, as well as that of the swift and martin, is a small beetle of the Scarabæus kind, which on dissection he "found in far greater abundance in their stomachs than any other insects." Two species of gnat, *Culex pipiens* and *C. bifurcatus*, are particu-

* Phil. Trans., vol. cix. p. 24.

larised by Mr. Main * as their favourite food. Sir Humphry Davy † has "seen a single swallow take four [Mayflies] in less than a quarter of a minute that were descending to the water." Without having actually examined the contents of its stomach, I have so often observed the swallow in localities presenting very different species of insects, and sweeping in the summer evenings through the midst of little congregated parties of various kinds, as to be satisfied that its food differs very considerably; in singular corroboration of which, an angling friend once resident near the river Lagan, repeatedly captured these birds with artificial trout-flies, presenting very different appearances. Izaac Walton informs us, that swifts were in his time taken in Italy with the rod and line; and according to Washington Irving, one of the present sports of the Alhambra, is angling for swallows from its lofty towers.‡

My correspondent, Mr. Poole, has found the mouth of the young bird filled with *Tipulæ*. In the autumn some years since, Wm. Sinclaire, Esq., a most accurate ornithologist, remarked a number of swallows flying for a considerable time about two pollard willows (*Salix fragilis*) which served as gate-posts to a field at his residence near Belfast, and on going to the place ascertained that the object of pursuit was hive-bees, which being especially abundant beneath the branches, he had an opportunity of seeing the birds capture as they flew within two or three yards of his head.§ The insect prey of the swallow and martin kept so near

* Mag. Nat. Hist., vol. iv. p. 413. † Salmonia. ‡ Tales of the Alhambra, vol. i.

§ In the British Naturalist (vol. ii. p. 381) the sand-martin (*H. riparia*) is mentioned as preying on the common wasp. In an article in the Field Naturalist's Magazine (March, 1834, p. 125) on the 'Enemies of the Hive Bee,' an anonymous contributor states, that having observed some swallows seize upon his bees in passing the hives in his garden, he shot them, and on opening them carefully, found that although "they were literally crammed with drones, there was not a vestige of a working bee." Instances of the *Hirundo rustica* preying on bees have been very rarely recorded. In a paper read before the Lyceum of New York in 1824, De Witt Clinton, in his amiable admiration of the whole tribe of swallows, indignantly declared that "they are in all respects innocent, and the accusation of Virgil that they destroy bees, is known to be unfounded both in this country and in Europe." But from Wilson's American Ornithology (Jardine's ed vol. ii. p. 153) we learn, that even in the United States bees constitute part of the ordinary food of the purple martin (*Hirundo purpurea*).

the ground on the evening of the 14th of August, 1827,—which was fine, after a day of excessive rain,—that in its pursuit, several birds of both species were killed with walking-sticks and umbrellas in some of the streets of Belfast. In the year 1838, I was informed by a bird-preserver in this town, that he had at different times received not less than twenty swallows which had been killed in the streets with walking-sticks or rudely-formed whips used by mischievous boys.

Song, &c. The swallow is one of the very earliest of British birds in commencing its morning song. About midsummer, this is begun occasionally between a quarter and half-past two o'clock. It is also continued late in the season. On the 13th of Sept., 1833, I heard one, when perched beside its nest, sing in as fine mellow tone as early in the summer; and on the 2nd of Sept., another year, several out of a number congregated on a house-roof, were engaged going over their amorous notes. Two passing near me on the 10th of Sept., 1841, sang sweetly as they flew in company with a number of others. The swallow's habit of following birds of prey, &c., has been observed by every one;—but a particular instance will be found noticed under kestrel at p. 59. I have often remarked (as Mr. Main has done,*) that these birds, on returning from a pursuit of the kind, "unite in a song [apparently] of gratulatory exultation."

Nests, &c. We read of the martin (*H. urbica*) being, of all its tribe, the most partial to and dependent upon man, but from a limited view only can such a conclusion be drawn. This bird, though often claiming for its nest the protection of the same roof that covers man himself, builds also against the wildest and most stupendous precipices. On the other hand, I know not an instance of the swallow selecting for its nest any place removed from man's direct influence. The situations usually chosen in the north of Ireland, are sheds, gateways, and outhouses of every kind, the site once determined on, being generally occupied for a series of years. All other nesting-places which have come under my own observation, or of which I recollect to have read, were, with

* Mag. of Nat. Hist., vol. iv. p. 413.

one exception, within the sphere of man's works.* In some parts of the county of Down, there was some years ago, and probably still is, a superstitious feeling against the destruction of swallows, when they build in cow-houses. The owners on such occasions were most particular in cautioning their children and others not to injure the birds, their eggs, or young, imagining that if they did so, some evil would befal the cattle; that they would give blood instead of milk, &c. Indeed, in the north of Ireland generally, the destruction of any of the swallow tribe is commonly considered an act of wanton cruelty. Their familiarity, and the trust which—like the robin—they repose in man, render them general favourites.

In the north of Ireland, I have never known the nest of the swallow to be built in chimneys, although on account of its predilection for building within them, the species has received the name of chimney-swallow in different languages.† White remarks in his Natural History of Selborne (letter 18), that "in general with us this *Hirundo* breeds in chimneys; and loves to haunt those stacks where there is a constant fire, no doubt for the sake of warmth. Not that it can subsist in the immediate shaft where there is a fire, but prefers one adjoining to that of the kitchen, and disregards the perpetual smoke of the funnel, as I have often observed with some degree of wonder." It is singular that in certain countries only, the *Hirundo rustica* should thus be partial to chimneys. That these are preferred for

* Mr. Hepburn states that he has "seen nests of this species on the rocks about Tantallon Castle, opposite the Bass."—Macgillivray's British Birds, vol. iii. p. 569. Sir Wm. Jardine mentions the *H. urbica* as building there, in his edition of Wilson's Amer. Orn., vol. iii. p. 320.

† Chimneys are stated in general terms by White, Pennant, Bewick, Montagu, Selby, Yarrell, &c., (Montagu adds, that "it is not unusual to find the nest in outhouses, upon beams or rafters") to be usually resorted to in England for this purpose. The sites preferred in Scotland, according to Sir Wm. Jardine and Mr. Macgillivray, are similar to those above stated to be selected in Ireland. What Mr. Hepburn says of East Lothian exactly applies to the north of Ireland. He remarks that the nest "is built under arches, gateways, eaves and water-spouts, against the beams, rafters and lintels of outhouses, and under wooden bridges."—Macgillivray's British Birds, vol. iii. p. 569. Detailed information on the subject of the sites selected by the swallow for its nest in Scotland, from the pen of Mr. Durham Weir, and agreeing with my own observation in Ireland, will be found in Audubon's Orn. Biog., vol. v. p. 411, &c.

heat alone, I can hardly agree with White in believing.* In Sweden, it is called *Ladu Swala*, or barn swallow, from selecting the barn for its nest; in southern countries, as Italy, similar sites are preferred, as we have indeed learned from Virgil, and to the correctness of which, I can myself bear testimony. In the Morea likewise, within the town of Patras, I remarked in June, 1841, that they selected places similar to those chosen in the north of Ireland, their nests being built under the rude porticos in the streets.

One or two peculiar instances of the nidification of the swallow in the neighbourhood of Belfast may be mentioned. In the summers of 1831 and 1832, a pair of these birds built their nest in a house at Wolf-hill, although the door by which alone they could enter, was locked every evening, and not opened before six in the morning; being an early-rising species, they must consequently have thus lost for no inconsiderable part of the season fully three hours every day. A similar fact is mentioned in Capt. Cook's Sketches in Spain (vol. ii. p. 275), where it is stated that "in the southern provinces they [swallows] sometimes live in the posadas, their nests being built on the rafters, where they are shut up every night." In the Northern Whig (a Belfast newspaper) of July 2nd, 1829, the following paragraph appeared:—"We understand that a pair of swallows have built their nest in Mr. Getty's school-room, at Randalstown; and notwithstanding there are above forty scholars daily attending, the birds fearlessly went on with their labour, and now have their young ones out. One of the windows had been for several nights left down, at

* A singular preference to chimneys, though not for the purpose of building in them, was noticed on the following occasions:—

On the 6th of August, 1845, a great number of swallows appeared flying to the top of a tall "stalk" or chimney (perhaps eighty feet in height), isolated from other buildings, and rising from a green mound in the neighbourhood of Belfast. The day was close and warm, but the heat about the funnel (whence smoke issued) might have tempted some particular insects to the spot. There was a constant stream or line of birds ascending and descending: their flight had a most singular appearance, from the circumstance of their flying upwards from the ground to the chimney-top almost in a vertical line, and coming down in a similar manner. So regular were they in series, and so vertically disposed, as at once to remind me of a rope ladder up the mast of a ship; really not too extravagant a simile. On the 8th of September, a calm warm day, I observed numbers of swallows and house-martins flying in like manner, but not so vertically, to and from the top of a lofty chimney connected with a manufactory on the river-side at Dundalk.

which time the swallows found admittance, and after much apparent deliberation commenced their structure, which they carried on chiefly during the hours of the school; and though they had abundance of time to build, either before the school commenced, or after it was dispersed, yet they always preferred a few hours about noon for their labour, and seemed to do little at any other time. The scholars, much to their credit, gave them as little annoyance as possible, and the window is still kept down."

Under a very low shed in the hawk-yard at the Falls near Belfast, where my friend John Sinclaire, Esq., kept his trained peregrine falcons, a pair of swallows, regardless of the almost constant presence of four of these birds, constructed a nest in the summer of 1832. The man in charge of the hawks tore down the partly formed nest several times, but the swallows were not to be so deterred, and persisted in completing it within about three yards of a block, on which one of the hawks constantly perched: in due time the young appeared and got off in safety. Although such places as the swallow usually prefers for its nest, are not only contiguous to, but numerous in, the immediate vicinity of the hawk-yard, and all the other sheds and office-houses are considerably higher than the erection there, this singular locality was again selected in 1833. The nest of the former year was once more used, most probably by the same pair or their progeny, as it is an established fact that swallows return to the same place year after year, and that the young revisit the place of their birth.* The brood escaped from it without any casualty. There were five falcons there that season. Two new nests were also built and successfully occupied; one of which, I remarked on the 10th of August, contained eggs for a second brood, and on the 19th of the same month, I had the

* We find a similar remark with respect to Lycia in Spratt and Forbes' work on that country. "Frequently in the Turkish houses we saw the nests of swallows stuck about all parts of the ceiling, each with a small piece of board fixed under to prevent the droppings soiling the cushions of the divan or the carpets. * * * The same birds, both among the storks and swallows, are said to return each year to the old nests, so that an annual fight takes place between the young of the past year and the parent birds for its possession. The noise they make during these combats is by no means agreeable or conducive to sleep, as we found by experience, in the village of Eski Hissar, where the walls of our dwelling-house were studded with the nests of swallows."—vol. i. p. 281, 282.

satisfaction of seeing it tenanted by young birds. This nest had for its support the wing of one of the departed falcons nailed against the wall, and on the centre of which it rested.* The entire height of the shed, which was erected solely for the protection of the hawks, is not above seven feet. The nests are about six feet from the ground, and built against a beam of timber placed on the top of the low wall supporting the roof. The height of the roof from the ground is four feet two inches, which leaves only two and a half feet clear for the swallow's flight between it and the heads of the hawks, as they perch upon their blocks. One of the nests is only six feet from the block occupied by a hawk, and from which this bird has liberty to move to half that distance. The swallows, however, flew closely past these rapacious birds without being in any way molested by them.

Leaving their young to perish. Mr. Blackwall in his Researches in Zoology, mentions the remarkable fact from personal investigation, that swallows, house-martins, and sand-martins not unfrequently leave their last brood of young to perish, and occasionally leave their eggs before they are incubated. He speculates on the causes of this "voluntary act of desertion," and combats the opinion of Dr. Jenner, that it is prompted by "the desire to migrate, *produced by a change in the reproductive system.*" Having given less attention to the subject than either author, I should perhaps be silent, but a few remarks on so apparently singular a proceeding may possibly not be considered presumptuous. In the instances alluded to, the young broods and eggs were deserted late in the season, and I should suppose at the migratory period. The paramount object would then seem to be migration, and when favourable weather and wind prevail, the love of offspring yields to the stronger impulse, and the parents take their departure. Had this favourable time been long enough protracted, they would have continued to tend their offspring and bring them to maturity. It is quite different at the season when the first brood is being produced. The primary principle which

* In White's Selborne an instance is mentioned, of a nest built on the wings and body of an owl, which hung from the rafter of a barn.

then influences them is, the production of their species; and no matter how favourable every circumstance may be for migration, they do not leave the country. I have attended to the departure of the *Hirundines* for many years, and to the influencing causes, and was at first surprised at the suddenness of their disappearance when favourable weather arrived. At the end of August, I have known the great body to depart, and at other times remarked them evidently waiting for weeks, and on to the month of October, before they would take their flight.

Perching. In perching, the swallow, unlike the swift, occasionally rests upon the ground by choice, roads being not uncommonly thus resorted to. On the sandy, and even the gravelly sea-beach, I have remarked them to alight in the autumn to repose, though objects were rarely picked up from the sand. I have observed a number of these birds daily frequenting a large mound of clay in the vicinity of houses throughout the month of August, long subsequent to the time that such material is required for their nests. On the occasions upon which I particularly remarked the circumstance, food was certainly not the object—the birds were simply resting. Mr. Macgillivray says of the swallow, that "it sometimes alights [on the ground] as if to pick up insects, which it has observed there," (Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 564.) and such, we may expect is occasionally done. On betaking themselves to trees, they generally exhibit a singular choice in avoiding the flourishing branches and alighting on those which are dead. It has been remarked to me by Mr. Wm. Sinclaire, that so soon as the young can provide for themselves, they do not return to the nest in which they were reared; from which circumstance, and from seeing large flocks of swallows fly in the autumnal evenings around the highest trees at his residence, and invariably disappear in their direction, he concludes that they roost on trees. White of Selborne, speaking generally of these birds, mentions their thus roosting late in autumn.

Frequenting the sea. The same author remarks, that "the swallow is a bold flyer, ranging to distant downs and commons

even in windy weather, which the other species seem much to dislike; nay, even frequenting exposed seaport towns, and making little excursions over the salt water. The "excursions" of the swallow over Belfast bay are of daily occurrence throughout summer. It may be chiefly observed attendant on the in-coming tide, where we may presume its food is most abundant, owing probably to the insects being driven off the beach by the encroaching waters. I remarked during the summer of 1838, that swallows course as regularly over the masses of *Zostera marina* with which the beach is covered on the western shore of Belfast bay, as they do over any meadows. On the evening of the 2nd of August, they were perched in great numbers on stakes which rise above the sea, and were likewise busily feeding over the surface of the tide, on the insects roused probably by its flowing over the *Zostera*. The stakes alluded to are just such as,—were they more remote from a public road,—cormorants would alight on to expand and dry their outstretched wings. *August 4th.*—Heavy rain to-day till about 2 o'clock, when it cleared up. I then walked out and the tide being full, remarked the tops of a number of the large stones near Holywood, to be covered with *H. rustica* (such as I saw distinctly, wanted the long tail-feathers). They all sat with their heads in the same direction, like flocks of *Grallatores* awaiting the falling of the tide. There were perhaps twenty on the largest stone. During the following summer, I remarked the swallows' daily flight above the waves of the sea, to be as regular as anywhere on land. When on different occasions, in the month of June, on the low mass of rock called the Mew Island (the smallest of the three Copeland Islands, off the coast of Down), this species, and it alone of the *Hirundinidæ*, always appeared; thus proving a propensity to range, as there is not a spot on the islet that would afford accommodation for its nest.

Flying late, &c. Mr. White (of Selborne) remarks of the swift, that "in the longest days it does not withdraw to rest till a quarter before nine in the evening, being the latest of all day birds." In the general terms in which this was meant to be understood, it agrees with my observation; but I have occasionally

at different periods during their stay, seen swallows on wing at so late an hour that they could hardly be distinguished. This occurred more especially throughout the month of June, 1832, which was remarkably cold and wet. On several evenings towards the end of the month, I saw swallows fly about at a quarter past 9, P.M. The wants of the nestlings doubtless prompted this late flight, and in some instances it was of no avail, as during the time young swallows were seen to fall dead from the nest, owing, it was conjectured, to starvation; this, too, in a locality where food should have been comparatively abundant. On the 12th of June, 1838, I observed a swallow flying about Wolf-hill at half-past 9 o'clock in the evening. The day throughout had been moderately warm, without rain.

In Mr. Francis Bailey's account of the eclipse of the sun, July 8th, 1842, as witnessed by him at Pavia, he remarks, that "the darkness during the time of total observation, was not so great as I had anticipated. I had caused a lighted candle to be prepared in order to be ready in case of need; but I eventually extinguished it, as I found I could read very small print and note the time by my chronometer without its assistance. Prior to the commencement of the eclipse, I had observed a great number of swallows flying about; but towards the middle of the eclipse they had all vanished, and did not make their appearance again till a few minutes after the first ray of light emanated from the sun, when they were as active, and soon became as numerous as ever."—Athenæum, 1843, p. 19. At the annular eclipse of the sun, May 15th, 1836, it was observed near Belfast that the birds not only ceased to sing, but hurried to trees, &c., as if night had suddenly come on. The instant cessation of their singing was remarked to be peculiarly striking. The swallows did not everywhere disappear on this occasion, for Mr. Macgillivray tells us he thought it singular, that although "the rooks and sparrows had gone to bed, thinking it was night, the swallows continued flying about as usual."—Br. Birds, vol. iii. p. 565.

Variety of plumage. We occasionally see varieties in the colour of the swallow. In the month of July, 1815, a pure-white bird was

seen flying about Stranmillis near Belfast, during ten days. In the same month of 1819, one of that colour was killed in Down or Antrim: in Donegal another has been obtained.* One was remarked throughout the summer of 1833 (?) at Portaferry, co. Down. It returned in the following season to the same place, but no white or pied progeny appeared in either year. A brood of four pure-white swallows was reared in the summer of 1838 in an outhouse at Hillsborough Park, in the last named county:—white ferrets (*Mustela furo*) inhabited the ground floor just beneath this nest. In the autumn of 1843 (?) a white individual was observed flying about in company with a number of other swallows near Dublin; and in the same season, another appeared in the glens, co. Antrim.† In the summer of 1848, varieties occurred in three instances near Belfast. One of a very pale whitish-fawn colour was taken from a nest in Malone; another, a young bird of the year, was presented to the Museum by Richard Bateson, Esq., of Belvoir Park:—it is of a light fawn colour of various shades; the wings and tail being almost white on the upper surface. In the old court-house, Newtownards, a nest of what were called "white swallows" was procured. I have always remarked that in particular seasons, birds are more prone to assume variety in the colour of their plumage than in others. I was not therefore surprised at the receipt of the following note from Mr. R. Chute, of Blennerville, Kerry in Oct. 1848:—"I got a very pretty swallow lately; its body, head, and all the under parts buff; the wings and tail white. It was shot near Listowel: I think it is this year's bird."

Departure. When wind and weather are favourable for migration, swallows, including many of the first brood, leave the neighbourhood of Belfast towards the end of August, but about the middle of September is the chief time of their departure. Until the middle of October some remain every year. Mr. Templeton notes his having observed a few on the 30th and 31st of October, 1813. On the 14th of November, 1815, one was repeatedly seen flying about Stranmillis near Belfast, where also on the 28th of October, 1819, three appeared after a severe fall of snow and

* Mr. J. V. Stewart. † Mr. J. R. Garrett.

a good deal of frost. In 1835 a swallow was remarked on the 26th Oct. near the town just named; and on the 3rd of Nov., 1837, Mr. H. Dombrain of Dublin shot one at sea near Lambay Island, when it was flying towards land. For several days during the week immediately before Christmas—from the 18th to the 24th Dec.—1842, a number of swallows were seen about the village of Holywood and elsewhere on the borders of Belfast bay, where from the novelty of their occurrence at such a season they excited much interest. The latest period at which these birds have been observed by Mr. Poole in the south, was on the 5th of December, the same year, when he saw two fly above the main street in Wexford, the weather being moist, and remarkably warm for the season:—he has not met with them there after the 10th of Nov., (1844) on any other occasion. On the 28th of November, 1845, an adult bird was seen on the border of Belfast bay. In 1846, a swallow was observed at an inland locality near the town, and on the 16th and 17th of the month, single birds appeared at different places near the margin of the bay. At the end of November, 1847, one was remarked at Castle Warren, co. Cork.

Seen on migration; on the Continent, &c. In the years 1811, 1812, and 1813, when my friend Dr. J. L. Drummond, of Belfast, was surgeon in H.M.S. San Juan, then anchored close to the New Mole at Gibraltar, he each year, both in spring and autumn, saw "swallows" (the species of which is not now remembered) every day during a few weeks at the former season flying northward, and at the latter southward. They kept flying throughout the day, and invariably in autumn as well as spring were in little parties, not more than three or four being generally together.* In the course of a tour which I made in the year

* Capt. Cook, in his Sketches in Spain, remarks of the *Hirundo rustica*, that "a few of these birds winter in the south of Andalusia. I saw them on the summit of the Lomo de Vaca, far from the haunt of man, living with the *H. rupestris*"—a species which, according to the same author, "winters in great numbers along the southern shore [of Spain]." Dr. Wilde states that when in the desert between the pyramids of Gaza and Dashoor at the end of January,—"the swallow tribe were in great plenty; the red-breasted swallow and the small grey martin particularly attracted our notice. I find that these little birds do not migrate like the swifts (which, however, do not approach this part of the country,) but remain all the year round in the vicinity of the pyramids."—*Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira, the Mediterranean, including a visit to Egypt, &c.*, 2nd Ed. p. 252.

1841, the swallow was seen as follows:—On descending the Rhone from Lyons to Avignon, some appeared on the 9th of April at several places, but were nowhere numerous. On the 13th of that month, a very few were observed between Leghorn and Pisa. At Malta, on the 17th, they were as abundant as we ever behold them in the British islands. On the passage of H.M.S. Beacon, from Malta to the Morea, two swallows flew on board on the 22nd of April, when the vessel was about forty miles east of Malta; on the 25th, when nearly fifty miles from Calabria, several appeared; towards the evening of the next day, not less than a dozen alighted on the vessel, and after remaining all night, took their departure early on the morning of the 27th, when ninety miles west of the Morea: throughout the afternoon and towards the evening of the same day (at sunset we were about sixty miles from the Morea) many more arrived, and all that came having remained, they appeared towards the close of day flying around the ship in considerable numbers.* On our arrival at Navarino, on the 28th, the swallow was observed to be common, as it likewise was, in the following month, in the island of Syra, at Smyrna and Constantinople: in June, about the island of Paros, at Athens and Patras; in July, at Venice, Verona, Milan, &c. At Trieste, where I spent ten days at the end of June, no swallows were observed, although house-martins and swifts were abundant; my not seeing them however, may have been accidental. When crossing the Splugen into Switzerland, on the 10th of July, 1841, swallows were seen flying about when we were at a great altitude. About none of the southern or eastern localities mentioned, nor in Holland, France, Switzerland, and Italy, are swallows, house-martins, sand-martins or swifts, more numerous, than in the north of Ireland, or the British islands generally.

I never met with swallows more plentiful anywhere than they were on the 16th of May, flying over extremely rich lowly-situated pastures, in which some of the Sultan's stud were grazing, between Constantinople and the *village* of Belgrade.—On the 14th

* In the brig "Margaret Miller," belonging to the port of Belfast, a swallow was taken in October, 1833, two hundred miles to the westward of Cape Clear, the most southern point of Ireland.

of June, the young were all but fledged at Patras. At this date, they are in favourable seasons equally far advanced in the north of Ireland.—The only localities from which, in the midst of summer, I ever remarked all the *Hirundinidæ* to be absent, were the south islands of Arran, off Galway bay. Not an individual of any of the species was seen here by Mr. R. Ball or myself, when visiting the islands on the 7th, 8th, and 9th of July, 1834, the weather being all the time very fine. Returning from them, we had no sooner reached the coast of Clare,—the nearest land,—than many of the *H. rustica* were observed.

In the later editions of Bewick's British Birds, a highly interesting account of the familiarity of the swallow in confinement, appears in a letter from the Rev. Walter Trevelyan.

THE HOUSE-MARTIN.

Hirundo urbica, Linn.

Is a regular summer visitant.

Being much more choice in the selection of haunts than the swallow, it is by no means so generally distributed over the island; and in some of the less improved districts, may even be called a local species. In Scotland, according to Mr. Macgillivray, the house martin "is more widely dispersed" than the swallow.—Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 575.

In the north of Ireland according to my observation, the house-martin is invariably later in its arrival than either the sand-martin or the swallow. It generally appears about the middle of April.*

The "trim and neat" style of the generality of houses, erected

* Mr. Blackwall states, that the average time of the martin's appearance at Manchester, is the 25th of April, and that of the swallow, the 15th of the same month. It is observed by Mr. Hepburn, that "the house-martin arrives at the village of Linton on the Tyne, in the last week of April, though in 1839, a few were seen by the 17th of that month."—Macgillivray's British Birds, vol. iii. p. 580. In the same work, p. 592, it is mentioned, on the authority of David Falconer, Esq., "that for the very long period of forty successive years, a pair of them had come to Carlowrie, either upon the 22nd or 23rd of April."

in the north of Ireland of late years, does not present such favourable sites for the nests of the martin, as that of an older date. Not only the "buttress and coign of vantage" are wanting, but the less feudal, though to the martin equally useful appendage,—the antiquated holdfast of the wooden spout, is now disused. Upon this the mud fabric was wont to be raised, ample room being afforded for the nest between its base and the spout which it supported. When in Ballymena, in July, 1833, I observed the predilection of the martin for the older houses to be so strongly marked, that against those in the more ancient part of the town, their nests were numerous, while not one was to be seen about any of the modern erections. With reference to this propensity, an instance may be mentioned, which suggests another cause, that influences the choice of site;—namely, the martin's being prone to return to its birth-place.* During a week's stay in the summer of 1833, at the picturesque sea-bathing village of Portstewart (co. Londonderry), which had been lately built, not one of these martins appeared, though the place was in many respects peculiarly suited to them. Although their abode was not taken up there, yet in the high and time-worn precipices which rise above the ocean at only a short distance to the eastward of the village, these birds were always to be seen. Particularly graceful they appeared, when gliding to and from their nests, placed beneath the summit of the stupendous basaltic arch that pierces the isolated mass of rock on which the ruins of a castle are situated.

This *Hirundo* is so partial to the noble basaltic precipices—rising directly above, or contiguous to the sea—which form the leading features of the north-east coast of Ireland, that it is always to be seen about them during the more genial seasons of

* Mr. Jesse, in the second series of his Gleanings in Natural History, gives the following extract from the unpublished journal of White of Selborne:—"July 6, 1783. Some young martins came out of the nest over the garden door. This nest was built in 1777, and has been used ever since." A nest built against a spout-head in York-street, Belfast, was occupied for four years successively. It has been proved by Capt. King, R.N., and Mr. Weir, that the same birds return annually to the same locality.—See Macgillivray's British Birds, vol. iii. p. 592.

the year. Clustering in numbers against these gloomy cliffs, its "pendent bed" may be observed in many places throughout the range; among others, at the Gobbins, where some hundreds annually breed. About the Giant's Causeway, their admirably buoyant flight has particularly attracted me, as they skimmed the varied surface of the shelving banks and rugged rocks, keeping with an easy grace the same distance from the ground, notwithstanding the extreme inequality of surface. The house-martin "is the most numerous of the genus in Rathlin, where it is found in all parts of the island, as well inland as along the cliffs which overhang the sea." It builds in "the range of white cliffs running along the north-western side of Church bay."* I observed considerable numbers of their nests in May, 1842, built in a similar manner, against the high and white limestone precipices of the Little Deer Park, Glenarm (county of Antrim). So many as twenty of them were in some places in juxtaposition. They almost overhang one side of the new line of road lately formed at the base of the cliffs, previously washed by the sea.†

About the sea-girt rocks of the peninsula of the Horn, in Donegal; those near to Ardmore in the county of Waterford; at the island of Lambay off the Dublin coast; and other similar localities, I have remarked the presence of the martin. It is said by Capt. Cook,‡ to breed in vast numbers among the rocks of the Alps and Pyrenees, often far from the habitation of man.

Martins occasionally build under the arches of bridges. At Toome bridge, where the river Bann leaves Lough Neagh, I saw many of their nests in 1834, and was told that for a long period it had been a favourite haunt. In 1846, the following notes were made during a stay of three days at Toome:—August the 1st.

* Dr. J. D. Marshall, in the same memoir, mentions, that one of these birds which he shot, "had its mouth completely filled with insects, among which were a large dragon-fly, and one of the *Tipulæ* [*T. oleracea*]." White of Selborne has remarked, that swifts and sand-martins feed on *Libellulæ*.

† In rocks of a similar kind, though in a very different scene,—the chalk-cliffs, which rise above the river Derwent, near Cromford, Derbyshire,—I observed many nests of the martin, in June, 1835. They were built as far in as possible beneath the overhanging rocks, in the same manner as under a projecting roof.

‡ Sketches in Spain, vol. ii. p. 275.

When we arrived at the bridge at twenty minutes past 8 o'clock in the evening, great numbers of house-martins were most noisy before retiring for the night, which they had done at half-past eight. Next morning, their call-notes were equally loud; not less than three hundred birds being on wing together. It is an excellent feeding station. My companion (A. H. Haliday, Esq.,) found quite a harvest of insects (*Phryganeæ, &c.*) on the railing of the bridge. This is a fine structure of nine arches, having its walls surmounted by a stone coping with an iron railing. The martins' nests are all in an unusual site, (though it would not be so for the *Hirundo rustica*,) beneath the arches of the bridge. This is not owing to any want of their usual building places, the eaves of houses; those in the village of Toome, distant only a few hundred paces from the bridge being perfectly suitable for the purpose, and similar to what are chosen in other parts of the country:—but not a nest is to be seen there. Hundreds of birds, too, covered the slated roof of the inn during the forenoons. We went under the arches of the bridge on our way to and from Church Island, and saw innumerable nests, looking most interesting, from the variety of form assumed in consequence of the nature of the locality; many were of a rude Florence-flask-like shape. The pellets of clay on the outside were remarkably large, appearing at first sight like gravel of pretty uniform size. The apertures to the nests on the southern side of the arches looked south, as those on the opposite side, did north, doubtless on account of the greater facility thus afforded during the progress of building, and afterwards for the egress and ingress of the birds. At ten minutes past 8 o'clock this evening, an amazing increase to the number of these martins appeared above the bridge: there could not have been less than five hundred together. At twenty minutes past eight, the whole body made a sweep to the arches of the bridge and a number retired to their nests, but several downward sweeps from on high, like those of starlings to their roosting place, were necessary, before they all got settled for the night. Their numbers reminded me of a swarm of bees hurrying to their hive. Until about roosting time they would seem to range to

some distance to feed. I saw many, early this evening, about little bays of the lake, and believed them to belong to the Toome bridge colony. After the martins had retired to roost, a few swifts continued flying above the bridge, in the neighbourhood of which only, they were before observed. On the following morning, a sand-martin appeared at the bridge with its congeners. Not a swallow (*H. rustica*) was seen there during the three days.

Houses are however, the best known building places of this species.

White, in the sixteenth letter of his Natural History of Selborne, says:—"It has been observed that martins usually build to a north-east or north-west aspect, that the heat of the sun may not crack and destroy their nests; but instances are also remembered where they bred for many years in vast abundance in a hot, stifled inn-yard, against a wall facing to the south." On this subject the following note was made on the 15th of July, 1832:—I this day observed twelve or thirteen nests of the *Hirundo urbica* built against a two-story house at Wolf-hill. These were all on the north-west side or front, excepting one, which was at the north-east corner. The other two sides of this house have in part a southerly exposure (S.W. and S.E.), and being fenced in, are consequently more private. A road passes those preferred by the martin:—on every side the facilities for its building operations are the same. In front of a thatched cottage not more than eight feet high, which is not only at the side of the highway, but constantly resorted to as a public-house, I remarked several nests of the martin. In the rear of this cottage, which is fenced off from the road, and its walls (from the building being on the side of a hill) considerably higher than in front, none of the nests appear. Some years ago a few pair built annually in front of the dwelling-house at Wolf-hill, but not more than a single pair occupied either gable. Nests were also displayed in considerable numbers in front of two lofty four-story houses in Belfast. Judging from the situations selected by the martin for its nests on these five houses (the three first mentioned being only a few hundred yards apart), it would seem that the bird is more influenced by the front of a house than by aspect; as the first faces the north-west, the second and third the south-east, and the fourth and fifth the south. In innumerable other instances, I have remarked that where facilities for building are similar on all sides of the house, the front was thus preferred by the martin, although the nests were opposite every point of the compass. This is particularly apparent in houses situated in streets which intersect each other at right angles. The aspect of the cliffs before mentioned, as being tenanted by the martin, is as different as that of the houses. One reason for the fronts of houses being thus preferred (in the instances mentioned, the low cottage and the four-story house are equally so,) is probably, on account of the more open space in front allowing of a freer range of flight to and from the nest. The following was noted as a striking instance to the same effect. It refers to Hever Castle, in Kent, a square building, fronting the south, well known historically in connection with Henry the Eighth, and Anne Boleyn:—When there in October, 1847, I remarked

great numbers of house-martins nests about the tops of the fine old windows of all the stories at three sides of the castle. They were equally common on each of these sides, and picturesquely clustered on the top of each other with the apertures above, below, and in all positions. The three sides on which they were, are the north, south, and west, not one appearing on the east, although it presents every facility that the three others do, in windows, &c. This side only is retired, and forms a boundary to a garden, the gate of which is kept locked. There are doors in the three sides of the castle resorted to by the birds, but no entrance on that they do not occupy. In front, the bustle of an occupied farm-house is superadded. The colour of the nests harmonises well with the lichen-stained sandstone building.

It has been remarked of this species, that the nest "is closed all around, except a small orifice, usually on the most sheltered side," &c. My observation on the side of the nest chosen for entrance in the north of Ireland, does not accord with this, as in nests closely adjoining, the apertures are on every side. Of nine nests in front of a house before alluded to, the entrances appeared on the north, south, and west sides, the wall against which they were placed occupying the eastern. On this house,—as is not unfrequently the case,—several of these architects had, like certain other bipeds when erecting their habitations, taken advantage of their neighbours' gables, and it may be presumed, for a similar reason,—that of being saved trouble and expense of labour: All the nests of the martin that I have particularly noticed here, had, with a single exception, the entrance close to the top. In this instance, although the nest was built against the wall of the house, beneath a projecting roof, the aperture was placed rather above the centre, in the same manner as that in the nest of the wren (*Troglodytes Europæus*). The entrances to other nests on the same house, were as usual.

Although the nest of the poor martin is often, in the north of the island, torn away from the houses of persons who imagine themselves to be possessed of good taste, yet there are others, who, disliking the harsh contrast between its clay-built shed and the snow-white walls of their mansions, are unwilling to disturb the summer wanderer, and for the sake of uniformity, have had its domicile whitewashed at the same time with their own. I first noticed this in the town of Antrim, where, on two houses, several nests thus appeared: their architects flying in and out, evinced their contentment with the change. In Hillsborough, I afterwards observed, that the same practice had been adopted, and without annoyance to the birds. When visiting the old church at Helmsley, Yorkshire, in Oct., 1844, I remarked that the nests of the martin built at the top of the windows so perfectly harmonised in colour with the venerable lichen-stained structure as almost to escape notice.

The statement of several continental authors, that house-martins, on finding sparrows in possession of their nests, had been known to rise *en masse*, and fill up the entrance when the intruders were within, would seem, from the silence of some of the latest British writers of authority on the subject, not to be credited by them. The compiler of the Architecture of Birds sets it down as a "fanciful legend;" but I have unquestionable testimony, that a case precisely similar to those related by the authors alluded to, occurred in 1832, in the next farm to our own, near Belfast.

When the house-martins returned in that year to a thatched cottage, belonging to Mr. John Clements, where they had annually built for a long period—and which then displayed fourteen of their nests—a pair found that sparrows had taken possession of their domicile. On perceiving this, they kept up such "a chattering about the nest" as to attract the attention of the owner of the house. After its continuance for some time, apparently until they were convinced that the sparrow was determined to retain possession, they flew away, and did not return for a considerable time, when they re-appeared with about twenty of their kindred. They now immediately commenced "claying up the entrance to the nest," which was done in the course of the day; next morning, the construction of a new nest was commenced against the side of the old one, and in it they reared their brood undisturbed. After some time, the proprietor of the cottage, who had never heard of any similar case, pulled down both nests, and in that occupied by the sparrow found its "rotten corpse," together with several eggs. A particular note of the entire proceeding, as related by Mr. Clements, was made by my brother soon after the occurrence; but to make "assurance doubly sure" before publishing the account in 1842, I inquired of Mr. Clements whether he remembered such a circumstance, and he repeated it just as narrated nine years before. Some other persons too of our mutual acquaintance, were witness to the chief parts of the proceeding, and saw the sparrow, together with the eggs, in the sealed-up nest.*

* Three recent occurrences of a similar nature are recorded by Mr. Weir (Macgillivray, British Birds, vol. iii. p. 591), and two others are alluded to under the head of "Swallow" by the Bishop of Norwich, in his Familiar History of Birds, vol. ii. p. 55, 3rd edition.

What appears to me the most singular feature in this case is, that the sparrow would remain in the nest, and allow itself to be entombed alive. But this bird was sitting on the full complement of eggs, probably in the last stage of incubation, at which period we know that some birds leave the nest only to procure such a scanty morsel as will barely support life. Occasionally, at such times, they allow themselves to be lifted off their eggs, and when placed on again, continue to sit as intently as if they had not been disturbed. The filling up of the aperture is not in itself a singular proceeding on the part of the martin;* but on this occasion, when the assistance of their neighbours was called in, would almost seem to be intended as an act of retributive justice on the sparrow. Their building against the side of the old nest is quite a common occurrence.

I have heard the call of this species exerted, to the no little annoyance of persons engaged in the cruel task of pulling down their nests, when the sufferers become as vociferous as their "weak voices" will permit, and thereby attract their neighbours from all quarters. These make common cause with them, by endeavouring to deter the spoiler from his work of destruction, "occasionally flying boldly, and at the risk of their lives, within reach of his outstretched hand, and again, with all the eloquence they can master, seeming most piteously to claim the edifice as theirs." † Martins are generally silent birds, but when congregrated for migration, their call is often almost incessantly uttered.

* Mr. Blackwall, in his Researches in Zoology, states, that a pair of martins, on returning in the spring to the nest of the preceding year, endeavoured to dislodge the bodies of their young, which had been deserted; but finding their efforts in vain, "closed up the aperture with clay, thus converting the nest into a sepulchre."

† Audubon (Ann. of Lyc., vol. i. p. 165) mentions a similar trait in the history of an American species, *Hirundo fulva*, in the following words:—"The energy with which they defended their nests was truly astonishing. Although I had taken precaution to visit their nests at sunset, when I had supposed they would all have been on the sycamores, yet a single female happened to be sitting, and she gave the alarm, which immediately called out the whole tribe. They snapped at my hat, my body, and my legs, passed between me and the nests within an inch of my face, twittering their rage and sorrow. They continued their attacks as I descended, and accompanied me some distance."

This species generally rears two broods during its sojourn. Once, as late as the 23rd of September, several old birds were observed to fly so repeatedly to their nests, that I had no doubt these at the time contained young.* The second brood is generally reared in the same nest as the first, but it is probable, that when the nest is not found suitable for the purpose, a second erection is undertaken, as on the 17th of July, I remarked seven nests in front of a house, which, in the month of October, contained nine.

Mr. White's remark (Hist. of Selborne, letter 18), that the young swallows "at once associate with the first broods of the house-martins, and with them congregate, clustering on sunny roofs, towers, and trees," is quite in accordance with my observation in Ireland. I have, more than once, noticed the martin in company with the swallow in autumn, at places remote from its breeding-haunts. On the 6th of September, 1832, immense numbers of both species were in company at the Falls, and flying so close to the ground as occasionally to stop for a moment, apparently to take their food from the very grass. They also alighted in multitudes on the fruit trees in the garden, and notwithstanding their decided predilection for perching on dead branches, they on this occasion chose especially for that purpose, two large cherry-trees in full foliage. Amongst these birds appeared a solitary sand-martin, a bird, which, as well as the house-martin, was never before seen about the place, and near to which neither species builds. From observing the swallow and the martin thus congregated for some time previous to migration, I have little doubt, great as is the disparity in their powers of flight, that they often leave the country together; indeed both species have been observed to alight in company on vessels very far out at sea.†

Respecting the separate migration of the martin, it may be

* In a note contributed to Mr. Bennett's edition of White's Selborne, p. 61, a particular instance is detailed of a pair of martins remaining behind for the purpose of bringing forward their progeny, instead of migrating with the great body of their companions. That the young are often deserted at such times by their parents, has been fully proved by Mr. Blackwall.

† C. L. Bonaparte, in Zool. Journ.; and Bloxham, in Mag. Nat. Hist.

mentioned, that on the 24th of September, 1834, I observed an unusually large colony of these birds congregated at Toome bridge, no other species of *Hirundo* being in the vicinity. On the 8th of October, when riding near Belfast, a very strong south-west wind prevailing, about twenty martins in a loose flock flew across the road, and proceeded for some time against the wind, at not more than from fifteen to twenty yards' distance from the ground. Probably, owing to the wind being too strong against them, they at length wheeled round, and rose very rapidly until they attained a great elevation. While in the act of mounting still higher, they disappeared from my sight, having all the time the wind with them. These birds were believed to be migrating. Feeling the effects of a powerful contrary wind, they may (as some persons believe the *Hirundines* generally do,) have ascended thus high in search of a more favourable current. On this occasion, however, the clouds, which were moderately high, were borne onwards in the same direction as the wind that swept the earth.

The martin is generally stated to remain in England to a later period than the swallow, but I do not recollect any year in which the swallow was not the last of its genus to depart from the north of Ireland. Mr. Poole mentions his having seen the house-martin near Wexford, so late as the 3rd of November in one year, and the 16th in another (1847): a swallow was seen by him on this day also. On the 1st of November, 1846, a martin appeared at Holywood, co. Down; and a swallow, on the 16th of that month, at the same place. At Seaview, on the borders of Belfast bay, so late as the 20th of November, 1845, I, for a long time saw three of the *Hirundines* disporting themselves. They were either *H. urbica* or young *H. rustica*, I felt all but certain, the former species, though the white plumage above the tail was not distinctly seen. They had not the long tail-feathers, but the size and mode of flight indicated their species: on the 28th of this month, a friend observed, at the same place, an adult *H. rustica* possessing these feathers. Mr. Hyndman, when at Tory island, off the north of Donegal, in August, 1845, was shown a specimen of

H. urbica, said to have been killed by flying against the glass of the light-house there, in December, 1844.

My observation on the house-martin in Ireland, being in unison with that of Shakespeare, who tells us that

> "Where they
> Most breed and haunt, I have observ'd, the air
> Is delicate."—MACBETH, Act I., Scene 6.

it was unexpectedly that several of them met my view, about one or two solitary houses, situated near the highest and bleakest part of the road between Harrogate and Bolton Abbey, in Yorkshire, on the 6th of October, 1844; I subsequently learned with surprise, from Sir Wm. Jardine, that the house-martin is a sub-alpine species, where it has come under his observation in Dumfries-shire. When on a visit at Jardine Hall, in October, 1845, he called my attention to its nests about the windows of the dwelling-house at Rammerscales, situated near the summit of the fine range of hills dividing the valleys of the Nith and Annan. He mentioned also its building at the toll-house at Tweedshaws—near the source of the Tweed—about the highest part of the road crossing the lofty Moffat hills, and where, in one of the windows, I afterwards saw three nests. The whole country around is very bleak and wild.

In the spring and summer of 1841, I observed the house-martin as follows:—When sailing from Malta to the Morea, and about fifty miles from Cape Passaro (the nearest land), on the 23rd of April, one of these birds flew into the cabin, and died soon afterwards: it had not met with any molestation on board. No more were seen until the morning of the 27th, when, nearly one hundred miles west of the Morea, a few appeared, and remained through the early part of the day, confining their flight to the lee side of the ship: in the afternoon still more were seen, hawking about in company with *H. rustica*; as flies were numerous, they probably obtained plenty of food: at four o'clock P.M., all were gone. On the 30th of April, this species had just commenced nest-building against the houses in the town of Navarino; in May, was common about Smyrna; in June, at Patras, where as usual, it was building against the houses in the town. At Trieste, in the same month, the house-martin was numerous, as it likewise was in July, about Venice, Verona, and Milan;—having in the last city fine nesting-places about the magnificent Arch of

Peace, its "cradle" being supported on the sculptured leaves adorning the ceiling of the gateway. This notice, compared with that of the swallow, as seen during the same tour, shows that as in our own northern climate, the *H. rustica* is much more generally distributed than the *H. urbica*.

The most complete history of this species, as observed in the British islands, appears in the third volume of Macgillivray's British Birds, where the author and his contributors, Mr. Hepburn and Mr. Weir, treat very fully of it from personal observation; the two latter gentlemen having watched the progress of nest-building, frequency of feeding young, &c., with the most praiseworthy and extraordinary patience.

THE SAND-MARTIN.

Hirundo riparia, Linn.

Is a regular summer visitant.

As the swallow is much more abundant than the house-martin in Ireland, so again is this bird considerably more numerous than the sand-martin. Owing to the nature of its haunts, it is in all countries a local species. It resorts to suitable places in all quarters of this island.

The sand-martin arrives the earliest of the *Hirundinidæ* in the north of Ireland, appearing occasionally at the latter end of the month of March. In 1828, several were observed in a mountainous situation, near Belfast, on the 29th of that month, and when pointed out to the respectable farmer, at whose place they appeared, he assured us they had been seen there about a week before that time. In the very late spring of 1836, they did not appear until a month after the usual period, and very few even then. The dates of their arrival in the neighbourhood of Belfast, in the last few years, are:—in 1842, (a remarkably late season) the 25th of April, when they at once appeared in numbers at their chief haunt, about forty being on wing over one part of the sand-pit, and thirty over another: on the 23rd of April, there was not one, so that the whole colony appeared to have

came together. In 1843, a single bird was seen on the borders of the bay, on the 28th of March, and at the same place in 1844, one was observed on the 31st of this month. On the 2nd of April, 1845, I saw about twenty over the sand-pit already alluded to; and on the 6th, double that number. I remarked them on the latter occasion, flying in and out of their burrows as in the breeding season. In 1846, three or four were noticed on the borders of the bay on the 7th of April; and from twenty to thirty in another locality, on the 9th of that month. The earliest in 1847, were two, seen flying over the bay on the 5th of April. I visited their chief haunt on the 14th, 16th, and 23rd; not one was seen on either of the first days, but numbers appeared on the last; the spring migrants generally were very late in arrival that year. In 1848, they were, on the contrary, very early. I saw a considerable number of sand-martins at their chief burrow on the 2nd of April, and they probably came some time before that date; having been absent from home for a fortnight previously, I had not the opportunity of noticing them earlier. One was seen near Armagh, on the 29th of March.

The observation of the eloquent Wilson (Amer. Ornith.), that the sand-martin "appears to be the most sociable with its kind, and the least intimate with man of all our swallows," has been objected to as erroneous by Rennie, in his edition of Montagu's Ornithological Dictionary (p. 20), but my observation leads me to consider it as critically correct. Although the sand-martin never tenants the swift's favourite abode, the tower or the steeple; attaches not its nest to our dwellings like the martin; nor with the swallow, claims the roof of our out-houses for protection; yet is it in a considerable degree benefited by the operations of man. The excavations in the sand-pit, when carried to such an extent as to form a high perpendicular front, are the means of affording to this bird a place to rear its young in comparative security. It appears to me, that such banks are selected, whether adjacent to, or remote from houses, solely from their adaptation to the purposes of the sand-martin, and not because the bird either seeks or "shuns human neighbourhood." It is as partial to the preci-

pitous banks, which, in the wildest and most secluded localities, rise in picturesque beauty above the river or the lake, as to the stratum of sand which overlies the quarry, or to the sand-pit, where the respective operations of quarrying for stone or excavating for sand are daily in progress.

A colony of these birds annually resorts to the banks of a spacious sand-pit within a mile of Belfast, and close to the old Malone road. In consequence of the sand being in such request here for building purposes, they have the labour of making entirely new burrows for their nests at least once, and occasionally twice, in the season. So much is this sand required for building, that, although the perforation made by the bird, will, where the material is soft, sometimes extend five feet inward, I have known the bank colonized by it, required for use before the first brood had escaped; when the labour of forming a second burrow in the same season was commenced. The following details respecting this locality may be given:—

On the 29th of April, 1832, a friend remarked, that the sand-martins had made thirty-two burrows in this place, and that about three days afterwards, two more appeared: he observed the birds employed in carrying hay and feathers into them. When visiting this place on the 18th of September of the same year, I reckoned seventy of their perforations.

May 18, 1833.—On the south side of the Malone sand-pit, the sand-martins have, since their arrival this season, made above eighty holes towards the top of the bank, some of them not more than two inches apart, although there is abundance of room; so much indeed, that the colony does not occupy more than one-fiftieth part of the banks suitable for their nests. In this locality, where the birds have a choice of banks from thirty to forty feet in height, and the sand is of a similar nature throughout, they always select situations most out of the reach of enemies of all kinds. It cannot therefore be said that "they exercise their propensity [for boring] without reflection."—Macgillivray's Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 599. Where they have not thus had a choice of locality, I have frequently seen their burrows subject to be destroyed.

This sand-pit, their chief haunt in the neighbourhood of Belfast, was entirely deserted by them in the summer of 1836; and from the progress of the excavation, not a burrow of the preceding season remained to denote that the species had ever been there. In 1837, I omitted to look after them, but in 1838, they were in numbers as usual. On visiting the locality on the evening of the 11th of May, I saw not less than sixty flying about, and so many were giving utterance to their feeble

note, as to produce considerable noise.* Their burrows of this season were scattered over the eastern façade of the sand-pit; and, as usual, all placed near the top of the bank.† Sparrows were stationed at the entrances to three of these holes. The burrows of the sand-martin in 1840, were fewer than ever known to me, except in 1836. There were but a few holes at the western and at the southern side, about a dozen at each place. The repeated injuries these poor birds have suffered here, from the banks containing their nests being excavated during their stay, led me to believe that they might have changed their quarters, but in the season of 1842, they were as numerous as ever.

August the 31st, 1843. I remarked on different occasions, that sand-martins were plentiful this season about the sand-pit, and went there this evening to see what perforations had been made. They had the north side of the bank near the top honeycombed, containing apertures very close together to the number of about 300, and I should think the whole of these were made this season, though certainly not all, nor nearly all, occupied by pairs of birds, as we know they will sometimes make two or three excavations before settling on one for a nest. Numbers flew into the holes in my presence, and two or three were seated in some instances at a single aperture: the sand is soft and "easily worked," so that the entrance here is large. Numbers, perhaps 100, appeared occasionally on wing together above the sand-pit. In the middle of summer I saw not less than 150 together on wing here, before the young of the year were able to fly. At the east of the sand-pit about 70 of the sand-martins' excavations appeared together, but they evidently belong to a former year; not a bird now looked near them. The gregarious habit of the species is admirably exemplified in this very spacious sand-pit, where, having abundant room to scatter themselves, they nevertheless huddle together as closely as possible.

1845. The common swallow, as already stated, has become very scarce of late years. In one of its favourite haunts,—about a public road, bordered on one side by tall trees near this sand-pit—where numbers were daily seen throughout the period of their stay, not one appeared on the different occasions during the last few summers when I particularly looked for them. The sand-martins had however taken their place, although they kept to quite a different beat when the swallows were there. On one evening in August, I reckoned about 120 on wing together. The house-martin as well as the swallow, has become much scarcer of late years; and martins and swifts were more numerous than I had ever seen them in the summer of 1845.

1846. 1847. The two latter species continued to be as plentiful as in 1845, and

* July 29, 1846. These birds were very numerous in pursuit of prey over the reeds at the Lagan side; where by listening for a long time, I did not hear them utter a sound. This is noted, in consequence of their being generally noisy, after their weak fashion, when in numbers about their colony. I have remarked many of these birds—thirty at a time—alighting on dead reeds at the side of this river,

† "The martins usually make their holes near the top of the bank, being evidently most in fear of enemies from below. I once saw a colony in great consternation, without being able for some time to discover the cause of alarm; when I observed a weasel, which made its *entrée* from above, passing from one hole to another, and no doubt making dire havoc either amongst the old birds or their young ones." Hewitson, Eggs, Brit. Birds, p. 219.

the sand-martin in various localities around Belfast, (as about trees at road-sides, &c.,) which they had not hitherto frequented, assumed the swallow's place in considerable numbers.

Of the places around Belfast resorted to by this species, were two, differing much in character; the one, a portion of the bank of the river Lagan, elevated not more than six feet above the usual level of the water;* the other, a stratum of hard sand only a few feet in breadth, overlying the limestone of an extensive quarry, at an elevation of about 600 feet above the sea; but at these places a few pair only bred. The burrows at the latter were within about eighteen inches of the top.

Where banks suitable to the mining operations of the sand-martin offer a secure abode in the vicinity of Lough Neagh, the species, as may be inferred from its partiality to water, is abundant. The precipitous sandy cliffs rising above this great expanse of water in Massareene deer-park; near Langford Lodge; and at Glenavy river;—three localities within the distance of a few miles, are resorted to by great numbers. On the 16th of August, 1836, Mr. Hyndman remarked several hundreds of these birds congregated, where the Glenavy river falls into Lough Neagh, and that about fifty at a time alighted on the earthy and gravelly beach of the lake. The weather was very stormy, and the wind blowing upon the shore. The birds did not appear to be feeding when on the ground. Sir Wm. Jardine records a proceeding, similar in some respects, in the following words:—"We once observed many hundreds of the sand-martin resting on the sands of the Solway Firth, upon a space not exceeding two acres; a small stream entered the sea, and they seemed partly resting and washing, and partly feeding on a small fly that had apparently come newly to existence, and covered the sands in immense profusion."

The most exposed locality in which I have noticed this species, was about the banks where the river Bush joins the ocean near the Giants' Causeway. I had seen numbers here many years ago; and in the month of June, 1842, when staying for some time in the neighbourhood, had frequent opportunities of observing them, either sweeping the sands where the river disappears in the

* I have known them at another place, not more than four feet above the water.

mass of waters, or flying above the ocean's waves. They breed at each extremity of this bay in miserable situations, burrowing at the one side, in a narrow belt of loose clay, above basaltic cliffs, the bases of which are accessible at low water; in the other, in hard clayey sand between stones, in the face of a gravelly and stony bank rising about ten feet above the beach: I never heard the species so noisy as when in the vicinity of this burrow. Their partiality to water or to the insects about it, seemed very evident here, as I have remarked all within view sweeping over the waves of the sea or the surface of the river, when various species of insects were abundant above the land. About a similar locality, the sandy bay west of Portrush, in this quarter, I likewise noticed sand-martins, and have no doubt that they breed there. Of the seven colonies of sand-martins already noticed in the county of Antrim, five are contiguous to water, to which I consider the species partial, although, to use the words of Mr. Macgillivray, they "take up their abode in situations favourable to mining, whether there be water near them or not."

These birds are so widely distributed over Ireland in situations similar to those described, that it is needless to particularize other localities. The bridge of Errif, in the county of Mayo, between Westport and Glenaan, shall alone be named, on account of the combined picturesqueness and grandeur of its scenery. They came under my notice there, on the 26th of July, 1840.

Departure. On the 18th of September, 1832, no sand-martins appeared at the Malone sand-pit. The whole colony, excepting a very few birds, were said to have taken their departure about a fortnight before that time. On the 1st of October, 1833, I was informed, that they had departed ten or twelve days previously. In both of those years, after the great body of these birds had migrated, I remarked a single individual, in one instance associated with the swallow, and in another, with the house-martin and that species together: in both cases remote from their burrows. They alighted on houses and trees along with their congeners, as well as accompanied them in flight. In neither year were these sand-martins seen after the other species were gone; hence it

may be presumed that they set out with them on their migration. On a visit to the sand-pit, on the 10th of September, 1840, not a bird was to be seen, but less than a mile distant I saw a few associated with house-martins and swallows, the latter of which especially were abundant.*

On the 2nd of September, 1842, I observed several of these birds fly into their burrows in a layer of hard sand about two feet in thickness, surmounting the high gravelly bank of a wild mountain stream, before the shooting-lodge at Aberarder, in Inverness-shire.

During a tour to the south of Europe and the Levant, made by the author in the spring and summer of 1841, this bird was only observed:—On the 9th of April, about the Rhone, between Lyons and Avignon, where very few appeared; on the 17th, when a number were seen about Valetta in Malta, in company with many swallows, house-martins, and swifts; on the 30th, when several were observed between Navarino and Modon. Aristotle having mentioned the sand-martin as frequenting the valleys of Greece, I was much gratified by thus meeting with it in the first valley, or rather defile, of the Morea that I visited.

Macgillivray's British Birds (vol. iii.) contains a very good description of this species by the author, enriched by valuable contributions from Mr. Weir and Mr. Duncan. Audubon gives a very full and interesting account of it as an American species. He remarks:—"The sand-swallow is a rather hardy bird; for I observed, that the transient cold weather that at times occurs in the Floridas at night, seldom forces them to remove farther south. On one occasion, however, when the ice was about the thickness of a dollar, many were found dead along the shores, as well as floating on the water." Orn. Biog., vol. iv. p. 587.

* Mr. Poole, with reference to the departure of the sand-martin from the county of Wexford, mentions its having been seen on the 31st of October, but he has not observed its arrival there so early as we have in the north. He remarks, that "they frequent our fields towards the latter end of autumn, though we never see them at any other time," and describes nests which have come under his notice, as being "from twelve to twenty-four inches from the entrance of the cavity;—composed of fine sea-grass, with a few pieces of dry grass-stalks; the burrow, as nearly as may be, horizontal, and of almost uniform diameter so far as the nest, where it is enlarged to a globular form. Eggs taken in the middle of May, and first week of June; five in number."

THE PURPLE MARTIN.

Hirundo purpurea, Linn.

Is said to have been once obtained in Ireland.

Mr. YARRELL states in his British Birds, that the species is "included, in consequence of a letter received from Mr. Frederick M'Coy of Dublin, informing me that a female example of the species had been shot near Kingstown, in the county of Dublin, which had been sent for dissection to Dr. Scouler a few hours afterwards, and when preserved was placed in the Museum of the Royal Dublin Society." vol. ii. p. 257, 2nd edit. The date of its occurrence is not mentioned: the communication respecting the bird was published about March, 1840.

We are further informed by the same author that "during the first week of September, 1842, two other examples of this same species were shot by Mr. John Calvert of Paddington, at the Kingsbury reservoir." One of these is a young bird of the year, with the outside tail-feathers not fully grown, and the other an old male, which circumstance, taken in connection with the fact that two or three days intervened between those on which they were killed, inclines Mr. Yarrell to believe that a brood of them may have been reared there. These additional instances of an American species occurring in the British Islands;—see observations on Carolina cuckoo, belted kingfisher, American bittern, &c.,—and in no more easterly part of Europe, strengthen the opinion that such birds crossed the Atlantic Ocean.

Audubon, in the first volume of his Ornithological Biography (p. 115), gives a very full and interesting description of the habits &c. of this species. He remarks that,—"the circumstance of their leaving the United States so early in autumn [they leave Boston, &c., about the 20th of August] has inclined me to think that they must go farther from them than any of our migratory land birds," p. 120. He adds in vol. v. p. 408, that "although this beautiful swallow reaches the vicinity of the Arctic Circle earlier than others, it is said to migrate far within the tropics, as, according to Mr. Swainson, it was observed in numbers around Pernambuco $8\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ south of the line."

THE COMMON SWIFT.

Cypselus apus, Linn. (sp.)
Hirundo „

Is a regular summer visitant.

Although this bird is common in favourite localities, the species must be noticed with reference to Ireland generally, as but partially distributed. Along much of the wild western range of the island it is rather scarce, and in some extensive districts is never to be met with. It is stated by Mr. J. V. Stewart to be rare in Donegal. During a week of the fine summer weather spent in the north-west of that county in June, 1832, not a bird of this species came under my notice. The swift, unknown in Connemara (M'Calla); is very rare about Tralee, where it never breeds (Neligan); and in the county of Kerry one pair only was ever seen by Mr. R. Chute. They remained but for a few days frequenting an old windmill in the village of Blennerville.

The swift is more regular as to the time of its appearance around Belfast than any species of the allied genus *Hirundo*, or, indeed, than any migratory bird. It may generally be seen during the first week of May, and frequently on the second day of that month:—even in 1842, when the arrival of birds generally was remarkably late, it was noticed on the 10th of May. Mr. Selby, in his Illustrations of British Ornithology, observes: "It has been remarked that these birds delight in sultry weather, with approaching thunder-storms, at such times flying in small parties with peculiar violence: and as they pass near steeples, towers, or corners of buildings, uttering loud screams, which White, in his Natural History of Selborne, supposes to be a sort of serenade to their respective families. This is fanciful and pretty; but I should rather be inclined to reason the opposite way, and to consider this action and cry as the consequence of irritability, excited by the highly electrical state of the atmosphere at such times." I agree with Mr. Selby in considering the remark of White respecting the scream of the swift to be merely "fanciful and pretty," as I have heard these birds scream in the manner

described, so soon after their arrival, as to afford sufficient proof that the cry did not proceed from the "males serenading their sitting hens," as incubation had not then commenced.* Nay, from the time that it has ceased until that of the bird's departure, the screaming is continued to the same degree as at any other period. But I cannot coincide in the opinion that "this action and cry are the consequences of irritability excited by the highly electrical state of the atmosphere at such times." This idea differing from my own, previous to the publication of the admirable work in which it appeared, I gave some attention to the subject for two summers, to see how far my preconceived opinion was justified. In the years 1832 and 1833, from the 7th and 9th of May, the days on which the swifts first came under my observation about Belfast, until the 1st and 3rd of June (when I left home), they daily kept flying about in small parties, screaming loudly, in dull and gloomy, as well as in bright and cloudless weather.

The following particular notices on this subject are abbreviated from my Journal:—

May 24th, 1832.—For the last eight or ten days the swift's scream has been daily heard; and when present this evening at the meeeting of an Historic Debating Society, the swifts obtruded themselves on my attention by flying, "in small parties," closely past the windows, screaming most furiously. Though amusing to the ornithologist, it must have been very annoying to the assembled company, to be "serenaded" by their ill-timed scream, which not only jarred most discordantly with the "eloquent music" discoursed within, but for the time being entirely drowned the voices of the speakers; indeed almost seemed to be intended as a mockery of what was passing there. During these ten days the weather has been rather dark and cloudy; the barometer remarkably stationary, and very high. With the exception of a few showers on one day, no rain has fallen.

May 27th and June 3rd, 1832.—Weather remarkably fine and warm: sky almost cloudless. The screaming of swifts heard above every other sound, about the localities frequented by them.

* In the last two years,—1847 and 1848,—my attention was directed to the earliest swifts of the season which I saw at Belfast by their loud screams. The date was the 9th of May in both years. In the former year, they had been seen over that town by another person on the 7th of the month. On the 4th, they were observed between Newry and Portadown. I have often remarked what doubtless led White to conjecture that the cry of the swift is the serenade of the males to "their sitting hens," as, at the season of incubation, these birds (but of which sex I cannot say) may often be observed flying about in the neighbourhood of their nests, and heard screaming only "when they come close to the walls or eaves."

May 22nd, 1833.—After eight this evening, which was very warm and the sky cloudless, swifts, as noisy as usual, were flying about in little parties of three or four: two of these parties would occasionally join, and continue together for a short time, screaming vociferously. Their evolutions with that accompaniment, have always seemed to me manifestations of pure enjoyment. When these parties were about to meet, and when just separating, their power of screaming was exerted to the utmost.* Evolutions, in which a much greater number of these birds participated, were witnessed on the 24th inst., the weather being similar to that on the 22nd. The state of the barometer and weather has been mentioned, that some idea may be formed whether or not the atmosphere could have been "highly electrical" throughout the varied weather described, or indeed daily throughout that of any two months in this climate.†

Swifts particularly delight in flying about the squares and large open spaces in towns. Lofty edifices, especially when in a state of dilapidation, are preferred by them for building in; but in the north of Ireland, where these do not often occur, they content themselves with more humble dwellings.‡ In many of our northern towns (where swifts are as plentiful as in any country) they select as their domicile the eaves of the oldest houses, or those from which the fast encroaching spirit of improvement, has not yet banished the thatched roofs. On the 8th of July, 1833, I observed many of these birds flying under the eaves and clinging to the walls of occupied two-story houses of this kind, in the town of Antrim. Although they and the martins appeared an indiscriminate multitude when flying about the streets, their places of nidification were quite distinct, the martins building on the south, and the swifts confining themselves to the north side: on a house just opposite the chief abode of the latter, I reckoned

* Mr. Macgillivray remarks, "that the loudest and most frequent cries are heard when birds are evidently in active and successful pursuit." At the times above alluded to, they certainly were not feeding.

† Mr. Macgillivray, in his British Birds, vol. iii. pp. 619 and 622, enters fully into the subject of the swift's screaming. His observations of 1837 very generally agree with mine, made a few years before. Dr. J. D. Marshall, in his memoir on the Statistics and Natural History of the island of Rathlin, where swifts are plentiful, states that the result of his observations is opposed to the views of White and Selby. He believes the loud screaming of these birds to be particularly induced by fine weather and an abundance of food.

‡ When on Ram's Island, in Lough Neagh, in the month of June, 1833, I remarked several of these birds flying in the vicinity of the ancient round tower, whose "rents of ruin" were most probably their breeding place.

about twenty nests of the martin. When in the town of Ballymoney, on the same day, I observed several swifts to fly under the thatch of a house similar to that described, while some inhabited nests of the martin appeared against it. On the 24th of June, 1834, the swift was remarked to have similar nesting-places in Lisburn and Banbridge. In all the above-mentioned localities, these birds were flying about in groups, screaming violently, the weather being delightfully warm, and the sky "purely, beautifully blue," not a cloud being visible. For a week after the former date the weather continued very warm and dry. Spirited horses that I have ridden, have occasionally been startled by the loud scream of the swift, as it swept closely past.

In Belfast, where houses such as those described are not to be met with, I have known the swift's nest to be placed under the window-sills of houses newly erected, to which the bird gained access by means of an aperture, about an inch in width, that the careless builder had neglected to close up. An ornithological friend has seen swifts fly under the eaves of low thatched cottages in the village of Magheralin (county Down), where they doubtless build.

Two swifts' nests *manually* examined by my informant in the summer of 1839, were placed on the wall-top of a two-story thatched house, and were like a sparrow's nest in a similar situation, but contained fewer feathers. In the one nest, were two eggs which had been long incubated, and therefore the full number; in the other, were three young birds. Swifts for some years previously had built at this house, inside of which the common swallow as regularly did so. From two nests in the same house, two and three eggs were severally taken, in 1848.

Swifts, like martins, frequent the basaltic precipices of the north coast of Ireland, from the southern extremity of the range at the Cave hill near Belfast, to their northern termination above the sand-hills of Magilligan. Their being always present about them during their sojourn, indicate that they have dwellings in the crevices.*

* White of Selborne mentions swifts "breeding in the sides of a deep chalk-pit at

In the fifth volume of the Mag. Nat. Hist., p. 736, Mr. Couch remarks: "It is not long that swifts have frequented stations convenient for my observation. At first they were about two pairs, but they have now increased to four or five; and it is singular, that according to my observation, there is always an odd bird." A similar circumstance was, for the first time, remarked by me in the summer of 1829, when three swifts resorted to Wolf-hill,* and took up their abode between the slates and window-frame of a loft not more than twenty feet in height. Here, where a shot was not permitted to be fired, and the odd bird could not have lost its parent by the fowling-piece, the circumstance was considered as "passing strange." During three months, the usual period of the swift's presence in this country, the three mature individuals only appeared. The following year, also, an odd number of these birds was observed at Wolf-hill, there being either five or seven. During those two summers, the houses there had, with respect to fallen plaster and the growth of lichens, mosses, &c., rather more of a picturesque appearance than is con-

Odiham." At the end of June, 1835, I observed numbers of these birds about the high limestone cliffs which rise in picturesque beauty above the river Derwent, at Matlock in Derbyshire, where it was presumed they had nests.

* This locality, situated about three miles from Belfast, and elevated 500 feet above the sea, was a favourite haunt of the *Hirundinidæ*. During the sojourn of the swift, this species, with the three others, might frequently have been seen at one view, the swallow, martin, and sand-martin, sweeping in company over the ponds, while the swift, though generally maintaining a superior altitude, occasionally broke through their ranks; the whole of the species, on such occasions, and indeed at all times, exhibiting the most perfect amity. The swift built under the eaves of an outhouse, the rafters of which displayed the nest of the swallow beneath them; under an adjoining roof, the "cradle" of the martin appeared, and not more than a furlong distant was the burrow of the sand-martin. It was extremely interesting to the lover of nature thus to behold at a glance all the species of these attractive summer wanderers that regularly visit the British Islands; and where they do thus appear, there are generally some charming features of natural scenery.

I observed the four species when (accompanied by Mr. Selby and the Rev. Edw. Bigge), in July, 1839, at Kilrea, where the banks of the river Bann are picturesquely wooded, and the expansive stream is impeded in its progress from Lough Neagh to the ocean by low and scattered rocks rising occasionally above its surface, so as to change the smooth mirror into a scene of active and "lusty life," delightful to the angler's heart. Swifts to the number of not less than a hundred, kept almost on the same level with the others.

In Malta, on the 17th of April, 1841, the day being very fine and warm, our four *Hirundinidæ* were in like manner observed in company, flying low, wherever we walked about the island; all the species were in numbers similar to what they are in their most favoured haunts in the British Islands. This is a fortnight earlier than the swift generally appears in the north of Ireland.

sistent with the most perfect order, but in the autumn of 1830 they were all repaired and *roughcast,* the swift's eyrie being carefully protected from the hands of the renovator: the species has not, however, since tenanted the place.

Swifts generally keep at such an altitude, that the vicinity of water is not enlivened by their presence as it is by that of some of the *Hirundines,* yet they may occasionally be seen flying over Belfast bay (particularly about the time of high-water), as well as skimming the surface of ponds and rivers.

In and since 1842, I have remarked, that the borders of the bay are very frequently visited by great numbers of swifts, during the period of their stay, although they have no contiguous breeding-places. Their favourite haunt on the Down side is about Richmond Lodge, where trees—backed at some little distance by a high terraced bank—bound one side of the road; between which, and the sea, at the opposite side, is a narrow belt of pasture, perhaps 300 yards in breadth. They are often as numerous here as swallows about an advantageous locality;—150 to 200 being seen together. During the last few years when swallows were so scarce, their place here has been entirely monopolized by swifts. These birds visit the opposite side of the bay about Fort William, &c., in similar numbers, and seem to be particularly fond of feeding above pasture-fields. I have no doubt that these large bodies move about as flocks to feed in company. Indeed, that such is the swift's habit may be inferred from the circumstance, of my having observed numbers feeding about the mountain-tops on one or two successive evenings, where on the following, though similar as to weather, not an individual would be seen. Over the town of Belfast, they were more numerous in 1842 than I had before known:—about forty individuals would occasionally appear careering together.

Swifts have continued very numerous to this year, 1848, inclusive, and often frequent in great numbers the Richmond Lodge "beat." Here, on the 12th of July, 1846, I considered there might be 150, while above the road at Westbrook, less than a mile distant, similarly open to the bay at one side and bounded by trees on the

other, not less than 120 were seen. Of the *Hirundines*, a very few house-martins only, mingled with them at the former locality, and at the latter, not an individual of any other species. Both places were favourite haunts of the swallow until the preceding few years, when it became so scarce. It is very singular thus to observe the swift occupy its place, as the sand-martin has done elsewhere, both these species having had entirely different beats, when the swallow appeared in ordinary numbers.

Once only have I witnessed these birds keeping regularly at a lower elevation than swallows. This was on the 3rd of July, 1838, a beautiful sun-bright day, when numbers of them appeared flying over Strangford Lough, near Portaferry, at from twenty to forty yards above the surface of the sea, while, in the higher stratum of air, swallows were abundant. I have observed the swift flying over low islets of this lough, remote from any breeding-place.

Bewick remarks (vol. i. p. 267, ed. of 1821) that swifts "are said to avoid heat, and for this reason pass the middle of the day in their holes [and that] in the morning and evening they go out in quest of provision." Mr. Macgillivray, too, observes, that "in dry and sunny weather [the swift] generally rests in the middle of the day." This has, I conceive, been assumed from the circumstance that swifts are not seen about their breeding haunts throughout the day, like the swallow and martin. Instead, however, of lying concealed at such times, they are ranging far abroad. During the very warmest and brightest days I have commonly seen them sweeping in great numbers over mountain heaths and around the summit of Devis, the highest mountain in our neighbourhood,* and near to which they have not any nesting-places: —in warm days, too, without sunshine, they may be seen feeding

* 1575 feet above the sea. When here on the 15th of May, 1836 (a remarkably fine day), to witness the eclipse of the sun, I saw fully as many swifts as had ever appeared when the season was farther advanced.

I observed them in like manner on the 6th of May, 1841, about the lofty mountain-tops, and there only, in the island of Syra, one of the group of the Cyclades. Captain Cook, in his Sketches in Spain, thus mentions a similar propensity of the alpine swift:—"I have heard they were not uncommon in Catalonia, but I never met with them, probably from their habit of going to feed at vast heights and distances in the daytime, which prevents their being seen." (Vol. ii. p. 276.)

here, when skimming merely above the top of the heath. Towards evening,—often about an hour before retiring to roost,—they return from these comparatively distant flights, and are then seen near their accustomed haunts for some time previous to retiring for the night, having thus led persons to believe that the evening is one of their favourite times for stirring out. Swifts may likewise be occasionally seen on wing in the vicinity of their nests throughout the very finest weather. The remark that the swift "in high windy days, will remain for hours in its retreat, motionless, and in the dark," * I consider equally erroneous with that just commented on. At such times, and during storms, as I have frequently observed, they wander abroad to feed in congregated numbers; on account of their prey then keeping low, they are generally to be seen in sheltered localities.

The following note was made on swifts as observed at Dunluce Castle, near the Giants' Causeway. On the 12th of June, 1842, I was attracted by, and remained for some time watching, a number of these birds, which, although the day was beautifully bright and warm, kept flying low, within a very few yards of my head. They occasionally, I thought,—but could not be certain, owing to the rapidity of their flight and the presence of house-martins,—uttered a short pleasing note, lower than that of the Alpine swift; but their loud shrill cry was stilled. The last place I had paused to observe *Cypseli* was in the island of Sphacteria, where the *C. melba* was the attraction, consequently the *C. murarius* was to-day brought into direct comparison with that species, on which remarks will elsewhere be found. It was highly interesting to witness their motions as they flew noiselessly—with the occasional exceptions already noticed—a few yards above my head. The tail would at one moment be drawn to a point, the next, appear square at the end; would then present a "tender fork," and the next instant, its full furcation: again, it would be expanded to the uttermost, with the feathers simply touching at their margins, and the whole tail appearing so membranous that the light shone

* Yarrell, B. B. vol. ii. p. 262. 2nd edit.

through it; lastly, it would be thrown into the form of an arch, which had a singular effect, and generally when thus exhibited the whole body was bent like a well-strung bow,—an appearance which was several times observed with very high interest. Within a few seconds of time all these appearances were assumed by the one bird. It is rarely, except in the warmest and finest weather, and amid attractive scenery, when everything around from earth or sea to the sky above, is redolent of joy and beauty, that we feel disposed thus to pause, and patiently observe.

On such an occasion at Mount Pagus, crowned by the ruins of the Castle of Smyrna, and commanding one of the most magnificent prospects in the world, the swallows, as they gently floated "on the bosom of the air" a few yards beneath, exhibited the tail expanded to such a degree, that the beautiful white portion towards its base was quite conspicuous; presenting in this respect so great a difference from its ordinary appearance, that I did not feel certain at the moment, of their being our own common bird.

White in the Natural History of Selborne (Letter 21) remarks of the swift, that "in the longest days it does not withdraw to rest till a quarter before nine in the evening, being the latest of all day birds." At Belfast, it may be seen about midsummer at nine, and not unfrequently for some time after that hour. I have noted them as heard, on the 27th of June, at a quarter after 9 o'clock; on the 8th of August, at five minutes after 8 o'clock, both days having been fine and warm; they occasionally remain on wing until it is almost dark. The three species of *Hirundo* usually retire before them.

The swift generally leaves Belfast about the 12th of August, but in 1840 I saw a number on the 19th of that month, and in 1832, on the 20th; in 1845, they appeared above the town as numerous as in June on the evening of the 18th, after which I did not see them, and the latest heard of in the neighbourhood, was a single bird observed on the 22nd and 23rd; in 1833, I remarked about twenty in company, near Belfast, so late as the 30th. They were pursuing their prey most leisurely, at about thirty yards from the ground, many swallows and martins occu-

pying the space immediately beneath them: the *Cypselus* and *Hirundo* each occasionally broke through the other's ranks. The month of August was much colder than usual that year, a circumstance, however, which could hardly have influenced the swift in remaining beyond the ordinary period. The first assemblage of swallows and martins, constituting a vast multitude, was congregated for migration at the same time and place; on the same day they and the swifts departed. In 1848, swifts became gradually scarcer, from the end of August until the 1st of Sept., on which day, two appeared at Belfast. On the 4th of September, 1835, some were observed by a scientific friend about Dunluce Castle; on the 11th of that month in the following year, three of these birds were seen by myself at Hillsborough (county Down), and many more of the *Hirundinidæ*, which appeared at some distance, were believed to be of this species.* About the same place, many of the *Hir. rustica* were congregated preparatory to their departure. I have never witnessed any unusual assembling together of swifts, towards the time of their migration, like that of the swallow and martin. During the period of their stay, they are, in favourite localities, generally numerous and fly in company.

In the course of a tour which I made to the south and south-east of Europe, &c., in 1841, the swift was met with at Malta on the 17th of April, when many appeared in company with the three common species of *Hirundo*,—*H. rustica*, *H. urbica*, and *H. riparia*. None were seen during the passage of H.M.S. Beacon from Malta to the Morea, though numbers of *H. rustica* and *H. urbica* alighted on the vessel. On the 6th and 7th of May, swifts were next observed about the mountain-tops in the island of Syra, the weather being very fine and warm. Towards the end of the month they appeared at Smyrna, and were abundant at Constantinople. Early in June they were numerous about a rocky islet north-east of Port Nausa, in the island of Paros, and were breeding in the fissures of low marine cliffs. At the end of this

* Mr. Poole, writing from the county of Wexford, notes the earliest appearance of the swift during four years to be on the 5th, 6th, and 7th of May; the latest Sept., 11th and 20th.

month they were plentiful at Trieste; and in July at Venice (remarkably so there), Verona, Milan, &c.

White of Selborne and Macgillivray give very copious and interesting accounts of the swift, from personal observation.

THE ALPINE SWIFT.

White-bellied Swift.

Cypselus melba, Linn. (sp.)
Hirundo „ „
Cypselus alpinus, Scop. (sp.)

Is an extremely rare visitant.

My attention was called by the Dublin Penny Journal, of March, 1833, to a rare bird, said to have been killed at Rathfarnham, in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, and added to the fine collection of native birds belonging to Thomas W. Warren, Esq., of Dublin. On calling to see this bird (as subsequently stated in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society for 1834, p. 29) I found it to be the *Cypselus alpinus*, a species then unrecorded as having occurred in any part of Ireland. . The specimen recognised as the alpine swift by Mr. Wm. Sinclaire, and communicated by him to Mr. Selby as an addition to the British Fauna, was obtained off Cape Clear, at the distance of some miles from land. Mr. Warren's specimen is incorrectly stated in the Journal, to have been captured in the month of February, as, according to a note made by that gentleman at the time, the bird was sent to him from Rathfarnham, on the 14th of March: it was in a perfectly fresh state.

I am informed by Robert Warren, Esq., junr., Castle Warren, county of Cork, that an alpine swift was shot near Doneraile, in that county, in June, 1844 or 1845, by a friend in whose company he was at the time. Common swifts and swallows were flying about the locality.

Since Mr. Sinclaire's bird was obtained, four individuals of this

species have been met with in England, as particularly noticed in the works of Yarrell and Macgillivray.

The first place I met with the alpine swift, was about ten miles to the north of Naples, on the 12th of August, 1826, when a great number were observed associated together in flight, at a high elevation. Their evolutions in the air were similar to those of the common swift. Independently of their superior size, which at once distinguishes them from that bird, the white colour of a portion of the under plumage, from which they have received the name of "white-bellied swift," is conspicuous, even when the bird is at a considerable altitude.

When on the continent, in 1841, (with my friend Professor E. Forbes,) this species was first seen by us on the 9th of April, as we descended the Rhone, from Lyons to Avignon. About half-way between these cities, several appeared flying over the river, and a few at all suitable places thence to Avignon. On the morning of the 28th of April, as we entered the splendid bay of Navarino, great numbers appeared careering high overhead. When walking through the petty town of the same name later in the day, alpine swifts were observed flying very low over the streets and houses, although the weather was delightfully warm and fine. On my visiting the island of Sphacteria, the western boundary of the bay, on the 29th, these birds were very abundant. The attraction here was a range of noble precipitous cliffs rising directly above the sea, at the western side of the island. These swifts inhabited the cliffs, which are similar to those tenanted by the common species in the north of Ireland. Although the day was as fine and warm as our northern summers ever are, these birds, as I walked along the top of the cliffs, swept about low and in numbers, occasionally within a few yards of my head: —this remark is made from the circumstance of the common swift being generally high in the air in fine weather; we do, however, occasionally observe it sweeping near the earth at such times. Though larger, they in general appearance and flight strongly resemble the common swift: they are very noisy, almost constantly uttering a loud twitter; besides which, they occasionally give a *brief*

scream, nowise resembling the long-drawn and shrill cry of the common species. Towards the end of May, I saw a few alpine swifts at Constantinople, wheeling about the heights of Pera, and near the high tower of Galata, in which they probably build. In the month of June, I met with this species at the island of Paros, and about the Acropolis at Athens. Throughout this tour, the common swift was more frequently seen than the *C. alpinus*, and at one locality only did they both appear;—this was at Constantinople, where the former species was abundant, and a few of the latter were observed. This seemed rather remarkable, as in no scene did I meet with the one species, in which the other would not have appeared equally at home. The only difference in their habits which struck me, was, that the alpine swift is apparently more partial to cliffs than buildings, the common swift more partial to artificial structures than to rocks.

As but little has been written on the alpine swift, the following interesting extract from Captain S. E. Cook's Sketches in Spain, is introduced:—

"Cypselus Alpinus.—Were living at the Brèche de Roland, skimming the glaciers in July. I could not ascertain whether they bred in the mural precipices there, or below in the villages. I never saw them in Spain, excepting at Merida, where they were in April, in company with innumerable martins and others of the tribe flying very low, with a note not unlike some of the terns (*Sternæ*). When high in the air, as I have seen them in descending the Rhine, they have a loud and melodious whistle. I have heard they were not uncommon in Catalonia, but I never met with them, probably from their habit of going to feed at vast heights and distances in the day time, which prevents their being seen. They arrive at Naples at the end of March, and then fly low. I believe they depart early."—vol. ii. p. 276.

THE NIGHTJAR.

Goatsucker. Fern-Owl.

Caprimulgus Europæus, Linn.

Is a regular summer visitant to favourite localities in all quarters of the island; but of rare appearance elsewhere.

In the neighbourhood of Belfast it is very seldom seen. A venerable sporting friend, who has been shooting here regularly in the season for above sixty years, has not during that time met with a dozen of these birds, although there are several districts apparently well suited to them. In the wooded glen at the "Falls," one was observed by Mr. Wm. Sinclaire and myself, some years ago, perching lengthwise (as the species is well known to do), instead of across the branch of a fine beech tree, then displaying the tender and beautiful green of its young leaves. I am aware of five only having been killed, within twelve miles of Belfast, during the last twenty years. Of these, the first was shot at Belvoir Park, on the 28th of July, 1827; the second, in the summer of 1835, in the district of Malone; the third, on the 25th of September, that year, in Hillsborough Park; the fourth, on the 1st of June, 1840, at Bangor Castle: its stomach was filled with the remains of several individuals of the dor-beetle (*Geotrupes stercorarius*); the fifth was killed near Langford Lodge, on the 1st of June, 1843. The late George Matthews, Esq., informed me, that in the district of the Ards, county of Down, the goatsucker has not unfrequently been observed; he had seen it on different occasions at Springvale; and a few have been shot about Echinville. It is a regular summer visitant to the Mourne mountains, and particularly to those in the vicinity of Tollymore Park.* The gamekeeper there, stated in 1836, that he had frequently found

* In Templeton's Catalogue of Vertebrate Animals (Mag. Nat. Hist. vol. i. new series), this bird is noticed as "rare about Belfast; but [not] uncommon at Mourne, county Down." The *not* before "uncommon" was omitted in the printing of the paper.

nests of the goatsucker, and rarely observed more than one egg in any of them. On the 28th of June, 1838, he pointed out to me one of their nests, if such it may be called, at the base of a young tree planted in the spring of that year in a plantation on the mountain side. The bird was seen on the ground from some distance, and did not take wing until we approached within seven or eight paces:—it flew but a short way before alighting. Two very young birds on the bare earth, whence their parent rose, were observed; and about the distance of a foot from where they were, the eggs had been incubated. A nightjar was shot at the deanery, Armagh, a few years ago; and two appeared on the 24th of July, 1843, at Knappa, in that county.*

The nightjar is common in the north-west of Donegal.† It is said to be a regular vernal migrant to the county of Wicklow,—the Vale of Avoca (a name familiar to the lovers of the "Irish Melodies,") being one of its favourite haunts. This bird is not uncommon, and breeds annually in some heath-clad mountains near Clonmel;‡ it seems to be very generally distributed in the county of Wexford, preferring for its abode the lower declivities of rocky mountains where fern and heath abound. About the 1st of May, it arrives there, and from its note has obtained the name of *Spinner*.§ It is occasionally shot in the neighbourhood of Bandon, county of Cork; and is said to breed on the mountains above Blennerville, county of Kerry.‖ A young plantation of limited extent, on the high banks above the river Blackwater, near Youghal, was pointed out to me by Mr. R. Ball, in July, 1834, as annually resorted to by these birds. In three specimens sent to him from this locality, the remains of the ghost-moth (*Hepialus Humuli*) only were found; one stomach containing nine of these insects. When visiting the lakes of Killarney, with that gentleman, in July, 1834, we had the gratification of seeing three nightjars hawking about in company, as we passed from the upper to the lower lake, near the highly picturesque mountain called the Eagle's Nest. The white markings

* Rev. George Robinson. † Mr. J. V. Stewart. ‡ Mr. R. Davis.
§ Mr. Poole. ‖ Mr. R. Chute.

on the tail of one,—said to denote the male bird,—were quite conspicuous in the twilight. On the following evening we saw another between Innisfallen and Ross Island.

Dr. J. L. Drummond informs me, that when H.M.S. San Juan (of which he was surgeon) was anchored near Gibraltar, in the spring of the year, a few nightjars flew on board. During the passage of H.M.S. Beacon, from Malta to the Morea, in April, 1841, some of these birds appeared on the 27th about the ship and alighted. We were then about 50 miles from Zante (the nearest land) and 60 west of the Morea. They came singly, with one exception, when two appeared in company. A couple of them were shot in the afternoon. A few others had been seen about the vessel on the two or three days preceding. On the evening of the 1st of June, two were killed, and others seen, in the once celebrated but now barren and uninhabited island of Delos.

White, in his History of Selborne, gives an extremely interesting account of the nightjar; Sir Wm. Jardine very fully notes its various modes of flight; in Macgillivray's British Birds, an ample description appears from the author, to which are added valuable contributions from Mr. Harley and Mr. Weir; the observations of the former having been made near Leicester; those of the latter at Bathgate, Linlithgowshire. The species has commonly been seen by a sporting friend, about the wooded banks of the river Stinchar, in Ayrshire.

Note to p. 206. Blue Tit, *Parus cæruleus*.—Since the account of this bird was printed off, a very beautiful variety, worthy of especial notice, has been kindly brought to Belfast for my examination, by the Rev. G. Robinson of Tandragee. It was shot in a wild state in the county of Armagh, in company with others of its species. It does not retain any of the ordinary colour. The entire under surface and the back, are of the richest canary yellow, with which the upper portion of the wings also, is partially tinged. The tail is pure white. The few first quills are white, the succeeding ones pearl-grey, but of a darker shade at the tips. The head is singularly parti-coloured with white, blue, greyish-brown, and canary-yellow. Bill, legs, and feet, of a whitish hue.

Having now disposed of the Irish species of *Insessores*, it may be desirable to offer a few brief remarks on the birds of this Order which are found in Great Britain, and not in Ireland. Occasional notices of some of them have already appeared in connection with the Irish species to which they are most nearly allied, but all will be here brought together.

Species obtained in Great Britain and not in Ireland.

Family.	Species.		Resident.	Ann. S. Visit.	Occa. Visit.
Laniadæ.	Red-backed Shrike.	*Lanius collurio.*		*	
	Woodchat.	„ *rufus.*			*
Muscicapidæ.	Pied Flycatcher.	*Muscicapa luctuosa.*		*	
Merulidæ.	Rock Thrush.	*Petrocincla saxatilis.*			*
Sylviadæ.	Alpine Accentor.	*Accentor alpinus.*			*
	Blue-throated Redstart.	*Phœnicura Suecica.*			*
	Nightingale.	*Philomela luscinia.*		*	
	Savi's Warbler.	*Sylvia luscinioides.*			*
	Great Sedge Warbler.	„ *turdoides.*			*
	Lesser Whitethroat.	„ *garrula.*		*	
	Melodious Willow-Wren.	„ *hippolais*, Temm.			*
	Wood Wren.	„ *sibilatrix.*		*	
	Dartford Warbler.	*Melizophilus provincialis.*	*		
	Fire-crested Regulus.	*Regulus ignicapillus.*			*
	Dalmatian „	„ *modestus.*			*
Paridæ.	Crested Tit.	*Parus cristatus.*	*		
Motacillidæ.	Blue-headed Wagtail.	*Motacilla neglecta.*			*
Anthidæ.	Richard's Pipit.	*Anthus Richardi.*			*
	Tree „	„ *arboreus.*		*	
Alaudidæ.	Shore Lark.	*Alauda alpestris.*			*
	Short-toed „	„ *brachydactyla.*			*
Emberizidæ.	Lapland Bunting.	*Plectrophanes Lapponica.*			*
	Cirl „	*Emberiza cirlus.*	*		
	Ortolan „	„ *hortulana.*			*
Fringillidæ.	Tree Sparrow.	*Passer montanus.*	*		
	Mealy Redpole.	*Linaria canescens.*			*
	Parrot Crosshill.	*Loxia pytiopsittacus.*			*
	American White-winged.	„ *leucoptera.*			*
Sturnidæ.	Red-winged Starling.	*Agelaius phœniceus.*			*
Corvidæ.	Nutcracker.	*Nucifraga caryocatactes.*			*
Picidæ.	Green Woodpecker.	*Picus viridis.*	*		
	Lesser-spotted „	„ *minor.*	*		
	Great-black „	„ *martius.*			*
	Wryneck.	*Yunx torquilla.*		*	
Certhiadæ.	Nuthatch.	*Sitta Europæa.*	*		
Hirundinidæ.	Australian Spring-tailed Swallow.	*Acanthylis caudata.*			*
			7	7	22

It is worthy of special remark, that all of the regular annual visitants are summer birds. Among the occasional visitants, are winter as well as summer migrants.

Resident Species. The Crested Tit is confined to Scotland, and has not been found southward of the neighbourhood of Glasgow;—the Cirl Bunting inhabits the more southern, and is very rare in the northern, counties of England: a single individual only has been seen in Scotland, near to Edinburgh;—the Dartford Warbler frequents the south of England chiefly, but has been obtained as far north as Leicestershire;—the Tree Sparrow is rare in most of the extreme southern counties of England, and found northwards to Northumberland;—the Nuthatch and Green Woodpecker inhabit the greater part of England and Wales; the latter bird becoming more rare northward in the former country;*—the Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker is found in most of the English counties, but seldom in the more northern. None of the last five species has been observed in Scotland.

Regular annual summer visitants. The Wood Wren is rather generally distributed over England and Wales, inclusive of the most western parts, and northward "to the middle districts of Scotland." The Tree Pipit frequents suitable localities throughout England and Wales; three individuals have been obtained in Scotland. The Lesser Whitethroat is found pretty extensively to the north of England, but is "rare in Cornwall and Wales;" very few have been met with in Scotland; and only in the south. The Wryneck is diffused somewhat generally over England, but particularly over the south-eastern counties; a few have been seen in Scotland. The Red-backed Shrike frequents England rather commonly to the west and north inclusive. The Pied Flycatcher is found from south to north of England, but "rarely in Dorsetshire and Devonshire," according to Yarrell, who does not name Wales as visited by the species, nor is it included in the Cornwall

* Macgillivray, (B. B. vol. iii. 94) to whom, as well as Sir Wm. Jardine, this bird is not known north of the Tweed.

Fauna of Couch. The Nightingale has been seen as far north as Carlisle in England, but not so far westward as Cornwall or Wales.* The last three species are unknown in Scotland.

Occasional or irregular visitants. Many specimens of the Mealy Redpole have been obtained in England, and some in Scotland. The Nutcracker, Parrot Crossbill, Blue-headed Wagtail, and Great Black Woodpecker, have several times been procured in different parts of England; the three former, each twice, and the last, once in Scotland (on the authority of Sibbald). None of the following seventeen species has been met with in the latter country. A few individuals of the Woodchat, Blue-throated Redstart, Savi's Warbler, Fire-crested Regulus, Richard's Pipit, Shore Lark, Lapland Bunting, and Ortolan Bunting, have been killed in different parts of England. The Alpine Accentor and Red-winged Starling, have each been thrice met with; the Rock Thrush, twice; the Great Sedge Warbler, Melodious Willow-Wren, Dalmatian Regulus, Short-toed Lark, American White-winged Crossbill, and the Australian spiny-tailed Swallow, have each occurred but once.†

As all the species included in the preceding table, except four, frequent the continent of Europe, and are unknown in the

* "The nightingale, I think, appears to migrate almost due north and south, deviating but a very little indeed either to the right or left. There are none in Brittany, nor in the Channel Islands, Jersey, Guernsey, &c.; and the most westward of them probably cross the channel at Cape La Hogue, arriving on the coast of Dorsetshire, and thence apparently proceeding northward, rather than dispersing towards the west; so that they are only known as accidental stragglers beyond at most, the third degree of western longitude,—a line which cuts off the counties of Devonshire and Cornwall, together with Wales and Ireland." Mr. Blyth, as quoted in Yarrell's Brit. Birds, vol. i. 303; 2nd edit.

Dr. J. L. Drummond informs me, that when he was, many years since, in H.M.S. Renown, at Gibraltar, in spring, some nightingales on migration, flew on board.

In the History of the Early part of the Reign of King James the Second, by Charles James Fox, there is an interesting letter from the author, addressed to Lord Grey, on the singing of the nightingale. See preliminary address "To the Reader," p. xii.

† The data respecting the distribution and occurrence of the preceding species in England, are taken from Yarrell's beautiful volumes; those for Scotland, from Jardine's and Macgillivray's works. Four of the species,—*Sylvia turdoides, S. hippolais,* Temm., *Loxia leucoptera* (as distinguished from *L. bifasciata,* Nilsson), *Acanthylis caudacuta,*—have been added to the British catalogue since the appearance of the 2nd edit. of Yarrell's work in 1845.

western hemisphere, we should rather, on account of the comparative proximity of Great Britain, expect them to be found there than in Ireland. The exceptions are the Lapland Bunting, Mealy Redpole, American white-winged Crossbill, and Red-winged Starling; the two latter being North American birds, which rarely visit Europe, might as likely have occurred in Ireland as in Great Britain; the two former, inhabiting the northern parts of both Europe and America, should rather—taking it for granted, that the individuals which visited the latter island came from the north of Europe—be expected to visit Great Britain than Ireland. The occurrence of the Australian Spiny-tailed Swallow in England is paradoxical.

Several of the species in the preceding list will doubtless yet be ascertained to visit Ireland; a few indeed have already been said to do so, but I have not been able to obtain any satisfactory evidence:—the Green Woodpecker is even stated to be resident in some well-wooded parts of the island, but no positive information on the subject could be procured.

Species obtained in Ireland and not in Great Britain.

Gold-vented Thrush. *Turdus aurigaster.*
Great-spotted Cuckoo. *Cuculus glandarius.*
Belted Kingfisher. *Alcedo alcyon.*

These are mere accidental visitants; a single individual of each of the first two was procured, and two specimens—about the same time—of the last. The Gold-vented Thrush is a native of Africa; the Great Spotted Cuckoo of Southern Europe and Northern Africa; and the Belted Kingfisher of North America. They will be found treated of in the preceding pages.

The Ash-coloured Harrier (*Circus cineraceus,* Mont., sp.), alluded to at p. 83 and p. 107 has since been obtained in Ireland.

The first intimation of its occurrence was communicated to me by T. W. Warren, Esq., of Dublin, who stated that a bird believed to be this species, had been shot about the 1st of Oct., 1848, by James Walsh, Esq., near Bray. The attention of Mr. R. Ball being called to the specimen, he after a critical examination reported it to be a female of this species as described by Jenyns. It differed only from the description in the two central tail-feathers not being uniformly brown, but being instead very faintly barred with black.

END OF VOL. I.

ENGLISH

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